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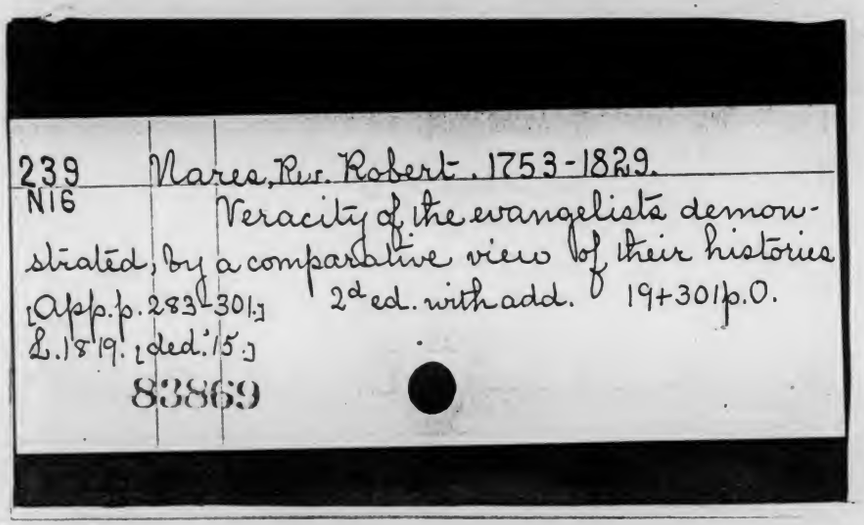

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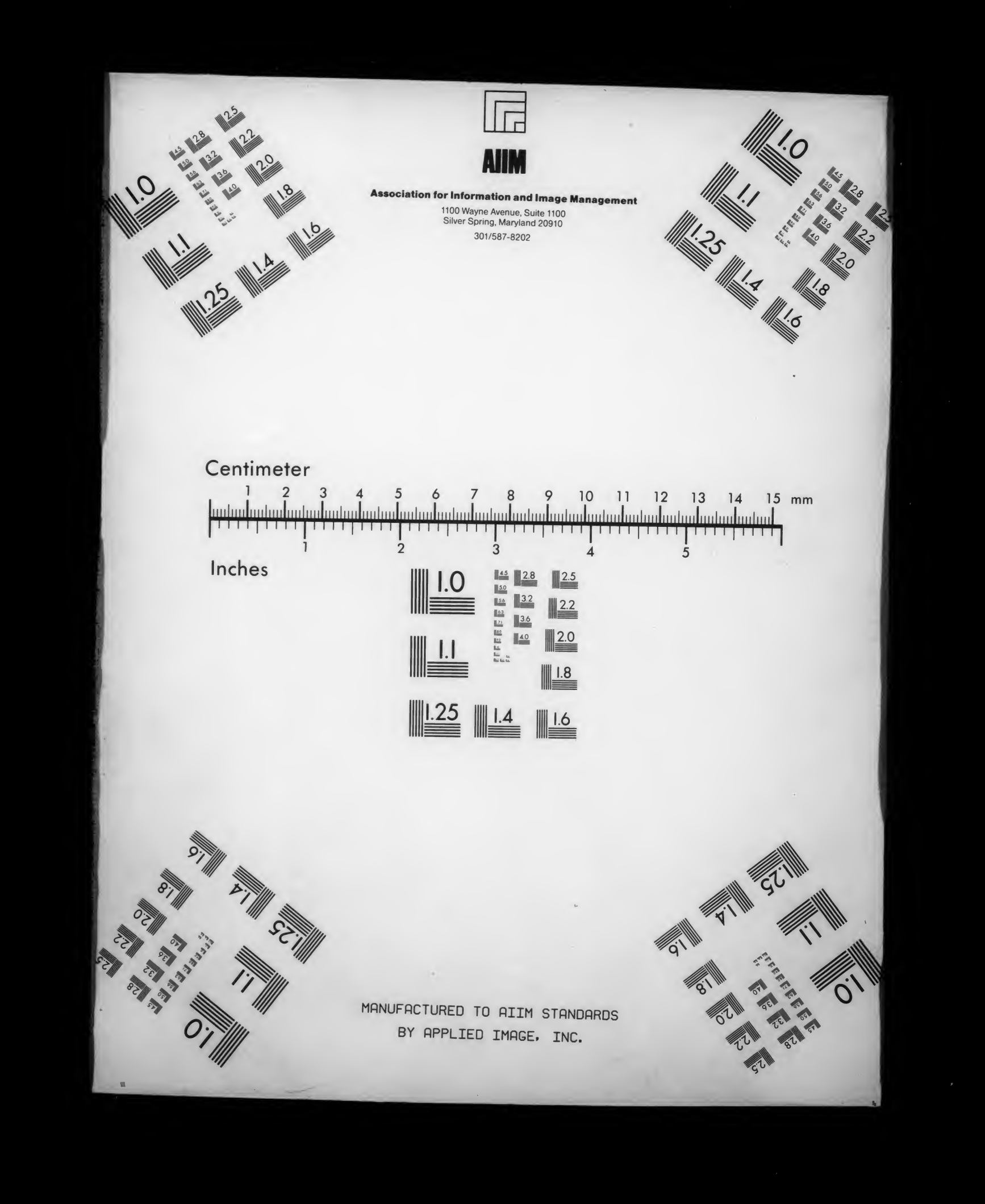
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THE VERACITY OF THE EVANGELISTS Demonstrated, BY A COMPARATIVE VIEW OF THEIR HISTORIES.

THE SECOND EDITION, WITH ADDITIONS.

BY THE
REV. ROBERT NARES, A.M. F.R.S. &c.

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TO THE

HONOURABLE AND RIGHT REVEREND

SHUTE,

LORD BISHOP OF DURHAM.

&c. &c. &c.

MY LORD,

It will not be asked, by any reasonable person, why a book, intended to illustrate the evidences of Gospel truth, should be dedicated to the Bishop of Durham: neither would it be an object of enquiry, why my personal gratitude should thus be expressed, were it known how much, and how long, I was indebted to your Lordship's kind

 encou-

encouragement and support, under the most arduous labour of my life, the conduct of the British Critic Review.

That the present volume, though small, may not prove altogether unworthy of the same protection, is the very ardent and anxious wish of,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient,

And most obliged, humble Servant,

ROBERT NARES.

St. Mary's, Reading.
Dec. 25, 1815.

PREFACE.

THERE is a great advantage in collecting our ideas, and drawing general conclusions from known premises. Many persons delight to trace the facts of history, but few to reduce them into classes, and to take a careful view of the results. Yet is this the noblest object of the study. In contemplating the important history of our blessed Lord, this method is peculiarly useful; it is even necessary, to a right comprehension of the whole. The narrative is heard, for the most part, in detached and broken portions; or, if perused

with more connection, still the facts themselves are separated, in four distinct histories; sometimes coinciding, and sometimes relating to different circumstances. Thus it is not easy to consider them in one comprehensive view.

To obviate this difficulty, works called *Diatessarons* and *Harmonies* have been formed, by learned and pious men, in all ages of Christianity. It may be necessary to inform some readers wherein these differ from each other. A *Diatessaron* is one connected narrative formed out of the words of the four Evangelists, skilfully blended together * ; but so blended as not to admit of any

* The name is derived from Διὰ τεσσαρῶν, (*Dia Tessarōn*), meaning *from four*, in Greek; and we read of their formation in very early periods of the

any repetitions; always inserting the words of that writer who gives the fullest account; and supplying from the others such circumstances as he may have omitted: thus forming, as it were, a new history; but still in the very words of the sacred historians. A *Harmony*, so called, because it points out clearly the *agreement* of the several writers, disposes all the words of the four Evangelists into four distinct columns, (or any other convenient mode of arrangement) in such a manner, that all the narratives proceed together, when all relate the same things; or three, two, or only one, according as the case may require. Both these me-

the faith. An excellent *Diatessaron* was published in Greek, by the late *Professor White*, of Oxford; and reproduced in ***Latin*** and ***English***, by the Rev. T. Thirlwall.

thods

thods have their uses: but it may be feared, that neither are sufficiently consulted by Christians, who are not also students.

Of these two methods, the former enables us to see, in one connected view, the sum and substance of all that the Evangelists have related. But it is attended with a difficulty of distinguishing the parts which belong to each. The latter assists us in examining and comparing the several accounts, with an accuracy not easily obtained in any other way. The present tract is chiefly drawn from the contemplation of an excellent Harmony*; and I am

* The best *Harmony*, as far as my knowledge goes, is that of Archbishop Newcome. But it is a large folio, and is also in Greek. To English readers

am much mistaken if it present not to the minds of some, perhaps of many readers, results and conclusions which, in their own attention to the Gospels, they had not anticipated.

It has been said of modern works in general, that they consist chiefly of old materials, thrown into a new arrangement. The present publication pretends

readers therefore, not conversant in the original language, I would recommend an English Harmony, in octavo, founded principally upon that of Newcome. It was published in London, in 1802, by W. Phillips, in George-yard, Lombard-street. But the compiler, though evidently an able one, has withheld his name. It is an excellent, and very useful work. A specimen of such a Harmony is given at p. 171, in the three narratives of the Parable of the Sower; and in the Appendix, No. V. as applied to another history.

to

to little more. The materials are taken from the Gospels alone. The comparisons have been chiefly made by the assistance of harmonized Gospels. If there be any thing new, which in Divinity it is peculiarly difficult to produce, it consists principally in the conclusions drawn from these particular views. It appeared to me a useful plan, to view the several portions of our Lord's history, in a collective manner. His infancy; the beginnings of his ministry; but more particularly, his Miracles, his Parables, his divine Discourses, his Prophecies, and his representations of himself; and to examine in what way all these are delivered to us by the four sacred historians. It seemed desirable to observe, whether all their narratives are conceived in the same spirit of veracity; and whether it can be believed, that they

they copied at all from each other; or all from any common record *.

The result has been the present *Manual;* for such it truly is in size, and I hope will be found in use. In it, I trust, is shown, that the scrupulous adherence of the four Evangelists to plain, unornamented truth, is the principal cause of those resemblances which have been thought to indicate copying; (a notion which reduces their four testimonies to little more in value than one) while a more exact and close examination, of their minute and verbal differences, completely overthrows that notion. It is shown, if

* In doing this, it has been no part of the author's object to oppose any person of eminence; but merely to serve, as it appears to him, the cause of truth.

I have

I have not failed in my design, that they have all agreed in delineating a character, which neither one nor all of them could possibly have invented; that they are all remarkable for teaching things, in the name of their Lord, which, of themselves, they never could have taught; for publishing Discourses as his, which they could not possibly have composed themselves; and for recording Prophecies, the fulfilment of which they could not, by any human means, have anticipated.

If these views be useful, they are, however, no discoveries. Most of them have been suggested in some work or other. But have they ever been so brought together?—If not, the very arrangement of them may be of service, and the object of producing them will be answered.

To

To render these collective remarks more intelligible, I have thrown together, at the end of the work, a set of lists, or tables, illustrative of the principal topics. First, a list of our Lord's Miracles; 2dly, Of his Parables; 3dly, Of his preceptive Discourses; 4thly, Of his Prophecies: and I have added to each article in these lists, a reference to the Evangelist or Evangelists, by whom each fact, parable, discourse, or prophecy, is recorded. These tables may, in some respects, answer the purpose of a Harmony, so far as they go; but a good Harmony is still more useful; and whoever possesses such a work, may render them still more convenient, by adding, in the margin, references to the pages of that book.

By means of these tables also, every

a reader

reader may at pleasure pursue the argument further, and discover for himself new illustrations of the principles here laid down. For I have by no means endeavoured to exhaust the various subjects; but only to suggest a few important conclusions, leaving the rest to be formed, as they may occur in reading, or in comparing the sacred texts. The accumulation of arguments, altogether similar to each other, would have become tedious; but the application of such as are stated, to other cases and examples, may prove a pleasing, as well as an edifying employment, to the reader.

To add even a small portion of illustration to sacred truths, or of confirmation to sound faith; to make what was known, more clear; or to suggest arguments which

which would not occur, but under a peculiar mode of consideration; these are offices analogous to those which every preacher attempts to fulfil in his discourses. But there are topics which cannot well be comprehended in discourses from the pulpit; and for these we may allowably endeavour to find a more extended consideration, by addressing them to the public at large. In either case, the object is to do good, if possible; and to convey to the minds of others, with effect, those truths which we ourselves believe to be most certain, most important, and most sacred.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER I.

The Character of Jesus Christ could not have been invented 7

CHAPTER II.

On the Evangelists as Historians 13

CHAPTER III.

Of the Style of the Evangelists 28

CHAPTER IV.

On the Beginnings of the Four Gospels 39

CHAPTER V.

Of John the Baptist 46

CHAPTER VI.

PAGE
Birth and Infancy of Christ 72

CHAPTER VII.

Public Ministry of Christ 88

CHAPTER VIII.

Of the Baptism and Temptation of Jesus 104

CHAPTER IX.

The Calling of the Apostles..... 109

CHAPTER X.

Miracles of our Lord..... 124

CHAPTER XI.

Parables of our Lord..... 153

CHAPTER XII.

Discourses of our Lord..... 197

CHAPTER XIII.

Prophecies of our Lord 223

CHAPTER XIV.

Our Lord's Representations of Himself 238

CHAPTER XV.

PAGE
Of our Lord's Appearances after his Resurrection 266

Conclusion 277

Appendix, No. I..... 283
———, — II..... 287
———, —III..... 290
———, —IV..... 294
———, — V..... 297
———, —VI..... 301

THE VERACITY OF THE EVANGELISTS DEMONSTRATED, &c.

INTRODUCTION.

To write a Life of Christ cannot be necessary. Several of acknowledged excellence already exist; they are in the hands of the pious in general; and they must all be drawn from the same divine source, the Gospels. But it has appeared to me that some general reflections, of considerable importance, may still be made upon those sacred histories; tending to throw light upon the whole, and

upon particular parts. To these reflections therefore I hasten, without fatiguing the reader with the form of a regular exordium. For considerations on this subject, the religious will no more require an apology, than the impious and the thoughtless will admit of any.

The more we reflect upon the Gospel-History, taken altogether, in its various features and peculiarities, the more firmly we must feel convinced that it cannot possibly be the history of a mere man; nor can have been produced by the common powers of human nature. The principal character, Jesus Christ, is a personage who has no prototype or resemblance in the history of the world*. He could not possibly have any;

* The Editors of the British Critic say (October, 1816, p. 392) that the creations of Shakespeare have no prototype in nature. This is a mistake, for they have all their foundation in the human character. Titania is a jealous and capricious wife; Caliban a gross and

any; for a man without a fault was never seen, and he had none. If there had been faults in his character, an honest historian would have recorded them, as Moses told his own; and the Evangelists those of themselves, and their brethren, even when most disgraceful to them. But they could not entirely have concealed the faults of their Master, even with the utmost desire to do it, had there been any in his character. They would have been traced in the circumstances of the narrative; they would have been elicited from the facts themselves, by the careful and acute reader, however studiously suppressed or

and brutal wretch, but who might be a man, if the poet had not chosen to feign otherwise. But besides, the merit of Shakespeare's supernatural fictions is, that they fall in with the general ideas of men, applied to such subjects. Every one feels that they have a kind of truth, though feigned. But the character of Jesus contradicts every common or previous idea of men, concerning the probable demeanour of so exalted a human Being.

 palliated

palliated by the historians. Ambition, for instance, would have appeared in his conduct; or pride; or the love of worldly glory; or cruelty, or violence of temper. Whatever, in short, marks the character of a public man, through his public actions, could not wholly have been hidden: and if some more secret vices had been studiously suppressed, the virulence of those adversaries, who made crimes even of his miracles, and prophetic speeches, could not have failed to trace them out, and to urge them strongly against him.

But he was without fault: and this is the more certain, because his proper historians have never directly said it. They have written the most simple of all narratives. They have not even attempted to draw his character, or to venture an opinion of their own upon it.

They have apologized for nothing; they have merely told what their Master said and

and did, on such occasions as they thought proper to record; and have left their readers to discern his character in the facts. They have acted most wisely in so doing. They have thus avoided every thing that could give a suspicious appearance to their history; all partizanship; all pleading of a cause. But observe, that this very thing is what was never done by any other historians in the world. It is then at least a reason for distinguishing the Evangelists from all other writers *: and this is no small matter.

But the history of a man without a fault, or even the suspicion of an infirmity, is as remote from the experience of mankind, as any thing that is most miraculous. Of those who have been celebrated for any famous acts or works, the general history has been, that some great qualities have

* We may except perhaps some other *sacred* writers; but that rather corroborates than weakens the pretensions of these.

been counter-balanced by faults equally great; or by infirmities which make us blush for our common nature. It would be an irksome enquiry to pursue, but the exceptions to this assertion could not be numerous, nor, probably, any; except such as arose from the imperfectness of our accounts. The examples, on the other hand, are many, striking, and well known.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHARACTER OF JESUS CHRIST COULD NOT HAVE BEEN INVENTED.

But I proceed further, and say, with the utmost conviction of the truth of the assertion, that, supposing the most ardent desire to impose upon the world the picture of a man without a fault, such a character as that of Jesus Christ, could not have been drawn from fancy or invention, by any person or persons who ever lived in this world, before that character had actually appeared. The reason for this is so plain and certain, that I cannot conceive it to admit even of a cavil. It is simply this: That the ideas or principles, upon which that character is formed, did not then exist in the world.

Humility, meekness, forgiveness of injuries, universal benevolence were not, any where, at that time, esteemed as virtues, or as exalted features of character. No man who ever lived, in any country of the world, would have proposed patience under insults, as a part of an illustrious character; or would have thought of uniting mild forbearance with powers superior to human nature, and an origin derived from heaven. Dignity of character indeed we see in the evangelical picture of our Saviour, the simplest yet sublimest dignity; but it is a dignity totally unmixed with pride; consequently it was a species of dignity never before seen on earth. It was a species of dignity which could not possibly have been conceived, since it arose from circumstances, in which a mere man could not possibly have stood; from an inherent and intrinsic elevation, depending neither upon the accidents of life, nor the opinions of men; but

but upon something extraneous, even to human nature itself.

Such a character could not, I say, have been imagined, for the circumstances which produced it were wholly inconceivable. The people of Israel, though they expected their Messiah at that time, expected only a mortal, a descendant of David: or if some among them, from those various prophecies, which certainly intimate a higher character, had expected God incarnate *, how was the imagination of man to form such a union for itself? Few persons, I believe, will venture to deny, that if they *had* imagined such a personage, they would have figured to themselves a very different being from the mild and humble Jesus; born in a low situation of life, though of the predicted royal origin; living obscurely for the

* "The Lord himself shall suddenly come to his Temple." Mal. iii. 1.

greater part of his time; and, even in the period of his public celebrity, without a regular home, or any ostensible means of daily support.

The Jews, more especially, could not have had such a conception; since it is demonstrable that their ideas ran wholly upon power, and splendor, and conquest; deliverance from the Roman yoke; and indeed, no less than universal dominion over other nations. A Messiah, formed by Jewish imaginations, would undoubtedly have been a mighty general, a conqueror, and a king. One whose arms, if not sufficiently potent by human strength, would have been seconded by miraculous agency. Their ideas would infallibly have recurred to the sword of God and of Gideon, or the irresistible progress of Joshua; except that they would have extended their hero's victories upon a more magnificent scale, making the whole world their theatre, instead of the confined

fined and inconsiderable territory of Canaan. The indications of this disposition may be traced even in the chosen twelve; but most remarkably when, after the resurrection of Jesus, they presumed to ask him, "Lord, wilt thou, at this time, re-" store again the kingdom of Israel*?"

But I say, yet more generally, that neither the Jews, nor any other human beings, could possibly have had a conception of such a personage and such a character as Jesus Christ, as he appears throughout the several Gospels; nor could they have drawn or collected it, except from the reality presented to their observation. The illustration of this important truth, in various points of view, will form the chief subject of these remarks; which, if they convey to any other minds the conviction impressed by them upon that of the

* Acts i. 6.

 author,

author, cannot fail to be of considerable use. Let me premise some observations on the general character of the Evangelists, considered as historians.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE EVANGELISTS AS HISTORIANS.

In the case of historians in general, three or four writers, agreeing independently to relate the same facts, are usually admitted to afford undeniable proof of the truth of the history. They mutually support each other; and the credit which might be denied to a single witness, is amply given to their united testimony. It is not, perhaps, sufficiently considered, that the Evangelists stand completely in this situation: and that the majority of the fact related by them are thus attested by three or four witnesses. Perhaps an obscure notion, that they conspired together to form the narratives which they have left,

left, or that they copied one from the other, may have deprived them of this advantage, which is allowed to all other historians. Yet there is sufficient proof that they wrote at different times, and probably in very distant places: and the frequent coincidence of their expressions may be accounted for by other means; very different from any kind of copying, or mutual communication *. St. Matthew has been generally supposed to have written his Gospel in the Hebrew or Syriac language, for the use of the Jewish converts in Palestine. Whether in one language or another, it is almost certain that he wrote particularly for the Jews, and while he lived among them. St. Mark is

* The theories which suppose them to have copied from each other, or from some unknown original, have more inconvenience than advantage. They all copied, as will be shown hereafter, from one authentic document, the truth; which was the natural cause of all their resemblances, and all their coincidences.

understood

understood to have written at Rome, for the Roman converts. St. Luke addressing his Gospel to a Greek *, most probably wrote in Greece; either Proper Greece, or among the Asiatic settlements, where some of the most illustrious Churches then were †; and if not before the Evangelists Matthew and Mark ‡, at least before their Gospels had reached the places in which he taught. He therefore, not being an Apostle, had collected the facts for himself, by a long and careful research from the testimony of those who were best informed. This he says himself, in his short address to Theophilus; and he wrote the history, professedly, because less qualified persons were then attempting it, and with much less perfect means. That St. John wrote after all the rest, and partly with a

* Theophilus.

† St. Jerom says that he wrote it on the borders of Achaia and Bœotia.

‡ As the late ingenious and learned Mr. Dunster endeavoured to prove.

view

view of supplying some things which the others had omitted, has been generally agreed; and may indeed be deduced, in some measure, from his Gospel itself.—He probably wrote in Asia, where his principal abode is known to have been.

The Evangelists therefore were by no means persons who conspired together, in one place, to form a history; but men who in different ways collected their materials, and at different times and places composed their narratives. St. Matthew and St. John were themselves eye-witnesses of all the principal transactions of our Lord's public ministry. They were continually with him, and St. John more particularly and confidentially so than any other Apostle; not excepting St. Peter. St. Mark and St. Luke, familiarly connected with St. Peter and St. Paul, after our Lord's departure, from them principally, and from other Apostles and holy persons in part, must have learned the facts which

which they related *. Here then is no pretence for supposing that they could conspire together, had they been so disposed, situated as they were, in Jerusalem, at Rome, at Greece, and in Asia. They are clearly separate and independent historians; and their close agreement, in the most important circumstances of their narratives, forms a coincidence of collateral testimonies, which cannot be paralleled in any other example.

Consider also the peculiar circumstances of their situation, which are all in favour of their veracity. Historians in general give no pledge for the truth of their accounts, except their regard for their own character, as honest men; and the pub-

* It has been suggested, with much probability, that St. Luke was one of the two disciples with whom our Saviour walked to Emmaus; and Mr. Dunster has well supported this idea in his *Discursory Considerations*, published, 1806.

lic

lic notoriety of the facts which they relate. But the Evangelists were all teachers of holiness; of a morality, superior to what had ever been professed before; men who held and declared themselves accountable to God, as well as man; not only for their adherence to truth, but for the perfect uprightness of their conduct in all respects. They were also exposed constantly to danger, for teaching and insisting upon the very facts which are related in their Gospels.

The circumstances which they record were indeed, for the most part, of public notoriety, in the places where they happened; and it is certain that they were never contradicted by any contemporary witness. Yet, had these writers ventured to depart in the least from the truth, they were more exposed to contradiction than any other historians. Of the four Evangelists, two only were Apostles *,

* Matthew and John.

they

they were therefore only two persons out of twelve; and there were at least ten other witnesses * of the very same facts and discourses. Nor were these inert or forgetful witnesses; for they were actually going about, at the very same time, declaring and teaching what they also remembered, under the same pledge of sanctity of character. Had there been then any material disagreement or contradiction, in the reports of these numerous witnesses, all professing to teach what they knew and remembered, of those most extraordinary events, the exposure of their errors must have been certain and inevitable.

So far was this from being the case, even in the smallest degree, that the most per-

* In fact many more. Matthias and all the others who constantly *companied* with the Apostles, (as St. Peter expresses it in Acts. i. 21) were equally witnesses of the same things.

fect

fect agreement appears uniformly to have subsisted, among all these teachers. The narratives of St. Mark and St. Luke, so far as they proceed from men who were not always eye-witnesses of the events, may be considered as collected from the reports of those who had been present; from the mouths of those among the twelve Apostles, with whom the writers had chiefly associated; or from other competent witnesses, such as the mother of Jesus, and many more persons who might easily be enumerated. Yet is their agreement with the other Evangelists complete and satisfactory; and neither do these two contradict the rest, nor do they meet with any contradiction from the actual attendants of the Lord.

It is perfectly clear and certain, that the world has never seen another history attested as this is, or approaching to it, in any proportion or degree. For how are histories

histories in general written? I mean contemporary histories, for such alone can stand in any way of parallel. Some one person takes upon him to note down events as they happen, and to collect information concerning them. Some things he puts down from his own knowledge; where that fails, he applies to the best sources within his reach, for correct information. Of persons not so employed, that is, who are not collecting materials for an history, or engaged in writing one, some are careless and inattentive spectators or hearers of the facts; the great majority, indolent and forgetful. When therefore the connected history appears before the public, there are few, besides the historian himself, who can call to mind the whole series of facts. But one circumstance is remembered by one reader, another by some others; and thus by their detached and broken testimonies, casually compared together, the writer, if accurate, in time obtains the credit due to his veracity and care;

care; or if otherwise, is detected and ultimately depreciated.

But in the Gospels we have a history of a distinct and separate kind. The events of an extremely short period of time, form here the subject of four distinct narratives; and they are events of so remarkable a nature, that they could not well escape the recollection of any person who had been present. All these were transacted, generally before twelve witnesses at least, (sometimes many more) all of whom had reasons for being anxiously desirous to keep in memory, not only the circumstances which happened, but the very words which were spoken. Had any one of this number attempted to give a narrative, which had been at all incorrect, all the rest would not only have been ready to contradict him, but in duty bound to do so: or if they had not publicly exposed him, even their own verbal accounts would have furnished abundant contradiction. For

For none of that number, particularly the Apostles, were accustomed to be silent upon the subject; all were continually repeating what they remembered of their Lord, to those whom they instructed in the faith.

It may be observed then, that even laying aside the idea of inspiration, (which cannot really be laid aside) the Evangelists were placed under circumstances very different from those of any other historians. Which of the four wrote first, has been disputed, but is not, to our present question, of much importance. The general voice of antiquity gives the precedence to St. Matthew: but it seems clear from the preface of St. Luke, that, if any other authentic Gospel had then been produced, it was at least unknown to him: owing perhaps to the remoteness of his situation at the time. He clearly states that others had merely attempted, what he purposed to do in a more perfect manner. But this he

he would not have said, with reference to either of the Gospels which now stand before his, in the collection *. The exact agreement of these four authors in many facts and discourses, is fully accounted for, from the studious care of each to retain and set down the very truth itself: while the minute differences, which, may also be observed, prove only that there was no copying of one from the other; and that inspiration itself did not so over-rule the natural powers of the writers, as to make them merely passive instruments, in the hands of a superior agent.

The supposition of a common document or previous Gospel, as it must be es-

* A most respectable modern author (Mr. Dunster) has very strenuously argued for the priority of St. Luke: but perhaps the general tenor of tradition, and the opinion of the times nearest to the Apostles, must be allowed to have more force than any recent arguments.

teemed, from which all the Evangelists copied, has been supported with all the force and acuteness, that a mind peculiarly gifted with ingenuity and powers of reasoning could possibly bring to the illustration of any subject *. But the utter improbability of a prior document, never named, nor even suspected to exist by the earliest Christians; a document entirely anonymous, yet of such authority as to be respected, and in part transcribed, by all the Evangelists, is too stubborn an obstacle for any ingenuity to soften, or any powers of reasoning to subdue. Let us say then with the late learned and sagacious Bishop of London †, that the words and actions of our Lord were the only common document: but that the peculiar care taken to remember these with minute accuracy, under circumstances

* By Professor Marsh, of Cambridge, (now Bishop of Llandaff,) one of the most learned and able divines of the present age.

† Dr. Randolph, in his anonymous tract against Dr. Marsh's hypothesis.

perfectly peculiar, was the principal cause of such coincidences in the Gospels, as are unknown in other narratives. That this cause is fully adequate to produce the effect, I am completely satisfied. With respect to the differences also observable in the accounts, on a more minute comparison of the Evangelists together, I am quite convinced, that they are merely those of men relating the same facts more or less fully. The accounts are never inconsistent with each other, but some words or some circumstances are mentioned by one writer, which another has passed over; a reason or explanation is given by one, which others have omitted. In short, they are in general such trifling variations, as even the same person, telling the same things, with the strictest desire to be accurate, would almost inevitably fall into, in repeating his own narrative at different times.

If we add to this, what we ought not certainly to omit, the aid of inspiration, which, according to the promise of their Lord,

Lord[1], brought back to their remembrance all things necessary for them to recollect concerning him, we shall no longer wonder at the precision of their statements; or at their employing frequently the same order of narrative, and nearly, though not exactly, the same expressions.

Let us conclude then, without hesitation, that, as there never was such a subject for history as our Lord Jesus Christ, so neither were there ever such historians as the Evangelists; so studious to tell the exact truth, so watched by collateral witnesses, of equal knowledge and accuracy with themselves, and yet so perfectly unimpeached, in all that they have written or advanced.

[1] John xvi. 26.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE STYLE OF THE EVANGELISTS.

THAT these four writers have also some characteristic differences, by which an attentive reader may distinguish one from another, is very true, and has been properly remarked by critics. These differences confirm the observation made in the close of the preceding chapter. They prove that inspiration suggested to the writers ideas rather than words; and left them to express those ideas in such words as their habits, or other circumstances, might lead them to prefer. But much more remarkable are the one or two great characteristics, in which they all agree, and in which they have no rivals.

These

These are perfect simplicity, and a total abstinence from all remark or suggestion, which might be calculated to influence the mind of the reader.

There is all possible evidence, in the tenor of the histories themselves, that every one of the Evangelists dismissed completely all personal considerations, in writing his narrative. Not one of them ever mentions himself, as the writer of his own Gospel. It was not indeed necessary, for their names were known to the faithful from the first, and there has never existed a doubt about them. But this omission is peculiar. It differs from the general practice of other writers, yet is common to all these*. Not only so, but they make no reflections whatever, as from themselves. Excepting the short address of St. Luke to Theophilus, at the opening

* Xenophon and Cæsar speak of themselves in the third person. But they dwell, with no small complacency on their own words and actions.

of his gospel*, and the few concluding words of St. John, at the end of his, the writer hardly once appears in any part of the Gospels. St. John, indeed, seems to intimate that he was himself the disciple whom Jesus loved, and of whom he spake to Peter, at his last interview with them; but even there he suppresses the name of the disciple; and it is only by putting circumstances together, that we discover *him* to have been the person.

The events related by all the four Evangelists, will be allowed to be sufficiently extraordinary. Yet not an exclamation of surprise or admiration escapes from one of them. The thing which approaches nearest to it is the reflection, related to have been made by the Apostles in general, on the stilling of a storm by the word of Jesus; "what manner of

* He has prefixed a similar address, to the same person, to his History of the Acts of the Apostles.

"man

"man is this, that even the wind and the "sea obey him[1]!"—Yet even this is given simply as the remark of those who were present; consequently not at all the remark of St. Mark and St. Luke, who could not have been there. Is this forbearance credible, in persons who had any reason whatever for writing, except the simple desire to communicate the truth? Is it any where to be paralleled? If any where, the similitude must be sought for in the Old Testament; and by that comparison no advantage can be gained to an objector.

Is it possible that, in relating the things which they have recorded in the Gospels, the Evangelists should have thought that they were not telling any thing extraordinary? that they were recording nothing but what every reader would at once receive, without asseveration or expla-

[1] Matth. viii. 27. Mark iv. 41. Luke viii. 25.

natory remark?—They could not think so. But they might, and I doubt not did think, that their veracity would never be questioned by those who knew their characters; and as for the facts, extraordinary as they are in themselves, they felt that they could not reasonably be deemed incredible, when it was recollected that the agent who performed them was the Son of God.

One such historian, so disinterested, so totally free from personal motives, who should undertake to relate any series of remarkable events, would not easily be found. He would be a prodigy. But here are four; four who wrote at different times, and probably in very distant countries; without comparison of notes, or communication of ideas. Yet do their narratives agree, in a manner that to some readers has given the notion of copying; but which singular and unparalleled resemblance is fully accounted for

for, by reasons already specified. If, therefore, no separate historians ever so minutely agreed, in any other instance, let it only be remembered, that no other writers ever have been so circumstanced.

For copying from each other, they could not have a motive. For as each acknowledged the authority and veracity of the others, when their narratives were known, they could not have been so absurd as to repeat, what had been already rightly told. Had they then written successively, with knowledge of each others writings, it is probable, nay, it is almost certain, that each subsequent author would have set down only, or at least chiefly, what his predecessors had happened to omit. To repeat in substance, but in different words what another had sufficiently told, might have been practised by writers who valued themselves upon their own peculiar style of expression, or their own mode of compilation. But to copy the

very words of another, whose account we do not mean to supersede, and to introduce them in the very same manner, is an idle and superfluous task, which no man in his senses would ever undertake *.

That the two Evangelists, St. Mark, and St. Luke, who were not eye-witnesses of the facts, and heard not the discourses of Christ pronounced, relate them nearly in the same words with those who were actually present, appears to me to prove, that the narratives of all the witnesses perfectly agreed. That what one wrote others had told, and each precisely in the same manner. The witnesses had all taken such care to remember, with minute exactness, the principal discourses of their Lord, and the occasions on which they were

* If I follow another writer, and copy the substance of his account in other words, I make it my own, and become responsible, as a second witness; but if I take his very words, my account is resolvable into his, and it is still but one testimony.

spoken, and were so often called upon to repeat them, in making and confirming converts to the faith, that a precision was obtained in relating these particulars, of which, if no other example occurs in the annals of the world, the reason is, because no other relators of facts and discourses were ever so situated. No other men ever had such words and actions to relate; such frequent occasion to repeat them; or so many powerful reasons to relate them with the strictest accuracy, on every possible occasion. From this cause it naturally arose, that they who wrote as original witnesses, and they who wrote from the testimony of such witnesses, agreed, not only substantially, but almost verbally. The exact and literal truth, without alteration or embellishment, was equally delivered by them; as when several perfect mirrors reflect the same object, the images will be the same in form, at the first or second reflection.

I am greatly deceived in my manner of viewing these things, if considerations of this kind do not much better account for the peculiar circumstances of the four Gospels, than any theories of common documents, or intentional transcribing from each other. With regard to the style of the Evangelists, in other respects, whether perfectly pure Greek, or otherwise, on which so much has been written, I do not here concern myself with the question, or enter into it. The circumstance which strikes me, as most remarkable in their language, is its close similarity to the Greek of the Septuagint translation. This adds, most evidently, much value and authority to that work; which, from this and other circumstances, appears to have been fully approved by the Apostles of Christ; and perhaps even by our Lord himself. This style seems also to have been peculiarly proper for the use of the Evangelists, as being a form of language already appropriated to sacred use. It has also the advantage

advantage of enabling us by the one to illustrate the other*.

By the very diligent researches of many learned men †, it has been shown, that almost all the phrases and expressions in the New Testament, which have been at

* Thus Κύριος, in the Septuagint, being regularly used for יהוה *Jehovah*, the constant application of it to Christ in the N. T. cannot easily be mistaken. See on this subject, the excellent remarks of the illustrious scholar, Jo. Aug. Ernesti, in his *Opuscula Philologica*, p. 336. Others have remarked this, but not with equal force. But, say the Editors of the British Critic, October, 1816. "Κύριος often meant no more than *Sir*:" but there are multitudes of passages in the Gospels, where nothing like that meaning can be given to it. As in Luke xix. 31. where Jesus bids the disciples say to the owner of the colt, "the *Lord* hath need of him," and they repeat it, on which the owner immediately lets it go. It may seem a trivial remark, yet it is surely worthy of notice, that on a colt, whereon never yet man sat, it might not have been safe for a common person to ride; even if it was an ass's colt.

† Raphelius, Krebsius, Palairet, and others.

times

times objected to, as not pure Greek, may be justified by the use of some Greek writer of good times. Still, that there is a colour of Hebrew style in these writings, in common with the Septuagint translation, must be perceived and felt by every discerning reader *. But what the purity of the style, as Greek, can have to do with the sacredness of the matter, is not very conceivable; unless it be supposed that one object of the inspiration, which assisted the Evangelists and Apostles, was to give rhetorical or critical examples, according to the approved rules of the Greek Grammarians. The Evangelists and Apostles wrote a language which was familiar to the majority of their converts; particularly to those who read the Old Testament in the Greek Version; and this was abundantly sufficient.

I shall make therefore, no further remarks on the style of these sacred writers.

* See note p. 291.

CHAP.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE BEGINNINGS OF THE FOUR GOSPELS.

Let it be observed first, for it is well worthy of observation, that these four remarkable histories have hardly any thing like prefatory or introductory matter. The very short address of St. Luke to Theophilus, at the beginning of his Gospel, is all that can properly be considered as of this nature. This affords a striking instance of that unexampled simplicity, with which these histories are written. The opening of St. John's Gospel is indeed sublime in matter, though simple in manner. It is an assertion of the eternal dignity of the Son of God, of whose appearance

pearance on earth the author was about to write. But it is not what is usually called prefatory matter. That is, it has no reference to the writer, the causes of his undertaking to write, or the plan of his work. It is a grand exordium to the subject, but nothing to the book as a composition, or to the undertaking of the Evangelist, as a man.

It tells us, however, clearly this; that the person, of whom the author wrote, was called by him *the Word*, which in Greek is *Logos*. Now it has long appeared to me that St. John is not, as is commonly thought, the only Evangelist who thus speaks of the *Word*, or *Logos*, as a person *. St. Luke surely personifies

* In the opening of the Revelations, it is particularly said of St. John, that he bore witness to the Logos. Ὃς ἐμαρτύρησε τὸν Λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. ch. i. v. 2.

Again, in the xixth ch. of the same book, the person who sits on the white horse is called *the Word of God*, καλεῖται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, Ὁ ΛΟΓΟΣ τοῦ Θεοῦ. v 13.

him

him quite as much, when he says, that the facts which he collected were related to him by those "who from the beginning "were eye-witnesses and ministers or at-"tendants of the WORD[1]." That is the *Logos**. For how could they behold or attend upon that, which was not visible, or had no personal existence? Observe particularly that the word in the original (ὑπηρέτης) denotes a personal attendant, even more properly than the word *ministers*, employed by the translators. The expression "ministers of the word" conveys, to the English reader at least, the idea of the *ministers of the Gospel*; but "eye-witnesses of, attendants upon, or "servants of, the word," cannot fail to imply that the Word was a person, capable of being seen, and of receiving attendance. In any language, *eye-witnesses* of a thing not visible must be a very

[1] St. Luke x. 2.

* Τῷ Λόγου.

harsh

harsh and unintelligible expression. When St. John also says, "*the Word* was made "flesh, and dwelt among us, and we be- "held his glory;" he comes very near indeed to St. Luke's "*eye-witnesses of the* "*Word.*"

I am well aware that this idea is not new *. How indeed should it be new? being so very obvious, upon the inspection of the Greek text, that it is more extraordinary for it to be overlooked, than remarked. But in this country it has been little noticed. It has been thought by some, that the same writer, St. Luke, has again given the personal sense to the term *Logos*, or Word, in the xxth chapter of the Acts, ver. 32; and if so, it is also the expression of St. Paul, whose speech is there recited. "And now, brethren, I commend you to "God and to *the word of his grace*, which "is able to build you up, and to give you

* See Wolfii Curæ Philol. in Luc. i. 2.

"an inheritance among all them which are "sanctified." By the *Word of his grace* is thus supposed to be meant our Lord Jesus Christ; in which case, it would be better to render it "*who* is able, &c." This however, is by no means so clear as the former passage *. But the *Word* whom the Apostles *saw*, and upon whom they attended, according to St. Luke, cannot, I think, be any other than OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

The exordium of St. John reminds us a little of the opening of the Old Testament; for he writes "In the beginning," which are the very first words of Moses †, St. Matthew also calls his Gospel, "The "book of *Genesis* ‡ of Jesus Christ;" but these

* I do not adduce the passage, Heb. iv. 12, on which some have insisted, because it seems to be more forced.

† Ἐν ἀρχῇ, בראשית.

‡ Βίβλος γενέσεως. In our translation—"The "book of the generations," &c. While I doubted whether

these coincidences may be merely accidental, and I do not pretend that any particular consequence can be drawn from them. I mention them only as curious. St. Mark simply says, "The beginning of the Gos-" pel of Jesus Christ *, the Son of God;" which, though very dignified, is as far as possible removed from ostentation or flourish.

On the genealogies in St. Matthew and St. Luke, I make no particular remark. Their difficulties have been sufficiently discussed, and ably solved. I shall merely

whether this remark was worth preserving, I found that a writer, nearly two hundred years ago, had thought it worthy of being put into verse.

Genesis et Evangelium St. Matthæi.
Explicat hic Christi *Genesin* liber, alter Adami.
Incipit à *Genesi* Lex, et Evangelium.
Owen Epigr. ad Henr. Princ. Lib. ii. Ep. 76.

* Observe, however, that St. Mark does not call him *the Son of Man*, as in humility he often called himself, but THE SON OF GOD.

observe,

observe, that they both bear witness to the persuasion of the writers, as Jews, that the promised Messiah was to be of the line and family of David; and consequently that Jesus was beyond all doubt, the person, so very splendidly foreshown by any of the prophets.

CHAPTER V.

OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

It is worthy of remark, that three of the Evangelists, Mark, Luke, and John, begin their histories with the account of this personage. The fourth (St. Matthew) takes him up later [a], and not till the time when he began to baptize. They all agree in representing him as the messenger, foretold by the prophets, who was to prepare the way of the Lord. This messenger, however, had not been so clearly foretold, as that four Jews, separately writing upon the subject, should all have thought it necessary to introduce him as a leading personage, unless they had been induced to

[a] Namely in chap. iii.

do

do so by the real importance of his character. The most distinct prophecy on the subject is that of Malachi.—"Behold I will "send my messenger, and he shall prepare "the way before me[1]:" from which, by adding another passage of the same prophet, it might be concluded, that this messenger was to appear, "in the spirit and power of "Elijah." "Behold I will send you Elijah "the prophet, before the coming of the "great and dreadful day of the Lord. And "he shall turn the heart of the fathers to "the children, and the heart of the chil-"dren to their fathers, lest I come to smite "the earth with a curse[2]." The other prophecy, which the Baptist always applied to himself, is less clear, as it makes no mention of a person, but only of a Voice, "*the Voice* of one crying in the wilder-"ness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, "make straight in the desert a highway "for our God[3]."

[1] Mal. iii. 1. [2] Mal. iv. 5, 6. [3] Is. xl. 1.

These

These being all the intimations existing, of a messenger, who was to precede the Messiah, could not, I conceive, have suggested to any man the thought of assuming, nor to any writers that of describing, a character so singular, as that of John the Baptist. Secluded from general society, living in the wilderness, by the wildest mode of subsistence, and habited in a style consistent with his uncommon mode of life; clothed in camel's hair, with a girdle of skin or leather *, and feeding on locusts and wild honey.—For what did he do these things? Not to establish *himself;* but to prepare the way for another. To be no more than *a Voice,* proclaiming glad tidings, and calling the people to repentance, that he might prepare them for the coming of THE LORD.

Let us consider then how the four

* This is said to have been the customary dress of Prophets under the Law.

Evan-

Evangelists have treated the history of this very extraordinary personage. Though they all bring forward his testimony, in a very early part of their Gospels, yet his birth, and the miraculous circumstances preceding and attending it, are related only by St. Luke. The narrative of this Evangelist is very precise and particular, with respect to those events. How did he obtain this exact and circumstantial knowledge? Prooably by diligent and careful enquiry, among the families principally concerned. The possession of such information was the very circumstance which determined him to write. "Having "had perfect understanding of all things "from the very first," or, perhaps more literally, "having accurately investigated "every thing from the very first *." He begins accordingly at the very earliest period; the miraculous conception of John, the forerunner of THE CHRIST,

* Παρηκολουθηκότι.

An enquirer so assiduous could not want sources of information on these subjects, at the time when St. Luke wrote. The events were such as could not be forgotten, in the families where they had happened; and the words which were considered as divinely inspired, and conveying important prophecies, would of course be carefully preserved.

St. Luke has not informed us from what sources he obtained his information, but he *has* told us "that he had accurately "investigated every thing." Where then could a careful investigator go, for intelligence respecting John, but to the remaining relations of that divine messenger; and particularly to the Virgin Mary? who, as we are repeatedly told of her, "kept all these things, and pon- "dered them in her heart*."—A considerable part of the first chapter of St.

* Luke ii. 19.

Luke

Luke is occupied in the account of the Baptist's miraculous conception and birth. These things are related by no other Evangelist. We may conclude, therefore, that they were not then currently reported and known among the disciples. They are the result of that peculiarly diligent enquiry, which St. Luke had instituted, for the reasons which he intimates to Theophilus; because many who had attempted, before him, to give an account of their common objects of faith, had omitted several things which to him appeared important. They had confined themselves, probably, to what concerned the person of Jesus. But St. Luke saw and felt, that the divine mission of that prophet, who was the immediate forerunner of Christ, and his first and principal human witness, was a most essential part of the great tissue of testimony, and therefore well worthy of his investigation. He enquired therefore, and discovered facts so very remarkable that,

 in

in committing them to writing, he could not but be conscious of rendering an essential service to the cause of truth.

He found by enquiry that John the Baptist, like Isaac, was born of parents who could not naturally expect children; whose barrenness had continued so long, that it could not cease without a miracle. He learned, and has related, that the conception of this child was announced by a divine vision, in which it was at once declared, that he should be the person called by Malachi ELIJAH. "And he shall go before *him,* [*the Lord their God,* in the preceding verse] in the spirit and power of Elias, [i. e. Elijah] *to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just*:*" which words are, in part, the very expressions of Malachi; and in part a paraphrase or interpretation of them;

* Mal. iv. 5. Luke i. 17.

explaining

explaining *children,* by those who are froward or *disobedient;* and fathers, as those *who are wise and just.* Thus was the prophecy of Malachi applied by the angel Gabriel.

When at length John was born, and Zacharias was permitted and inspired to speak, he also, after dwelling on the dignity of that personage whom his son was to announce, adverted to the peculiar office of John himself. "And thou, child, "shalt be called the prophet OF THE "HIGHEST, for thou shalt go before the "face of THE LORD*, to prepare HIS "ways. To give knowledge of salva-

* Κυρίου, that is, as was before observed, of JEHOVAH. Let those who doubt of Christ's high dignity observe these passages, in which HE whose ways are prepared by John, (that is Jesus) is called the HIGHEST, and the LORD, while the Jews are stiled *his people.* Nothing but the clumsy, and absurdly daring way, of denying the authenticity of these passages, can surely elude the force of them.

 "tion

" tion unto HIS PEOPLE, by the remission " of their sins." Hence Christ is also said by the Evangelist St. John to have " come to HIS OWN." Chap. i. 11.

Here then is the peculiar office of John, and his identity with the prophetic Elias, declared and made known before his birth, and again immediately after it. We may observe, that all these particulars must have been written by St. Luke, long after the death of John the Baptist, who was murdered by Herod, even before the termination of our Lord's ministry. Probably also, long after the death of Zacharias and Elizabeth, his father and mother, who were both advanced in years when he was born. The person from whom his intelligence was most likely to be gained was therefore the Virgin Mary; who lived in the house of John the Evangelist, after the passion of Christ.

If it be said that, in such case, St. John

John was the most likely person to have recorded these particulars, having most opportunities of learning them from the blessed Virgin, I answer, that, as St. John certainly wrote long after all the rest of the Evangelists, he had probably seen the narrative of St. Luke; and finding it complete and accurate, in these particulars, had no occasion to add to it, nor any disposition to repeat the same things, without necessity. But with the importance of the Baptist's character and testimony, it is evident that the mind of the Evangelist John was very strongly impressed. He begins with it, before he records a single circumstance of the life of Jesus. " John," he says, " bare wit- " ness of *him* [the WORD] and cried " saying, this is he of whom I spake, " He that cometh after me is preferred " before me: for he *was* * *before me,*"

* Certainly not in this world, for he was born some months after, but in his eternal pre-existence.

v. 15. He adds, "No man hath seen "God at any time*; the only begotten "Son, which is in the bosom of the "Father, he hath declared him."

To proceed with what relates to John the Baptist. When the time of his preaching begins, the three Evangelists, who wrote separately, and in distant countries, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, all give an account of it, very similar to each other; as to the words of his first invitation to the people, almost the same; because in fact, they each remembered the very words of his preaching, only repeating them more or less at large. St. John who wrote after these three, thought it unnecessary to repeat what they had all told, and is

* But God is said, in the Old Testament, to have appeared to Adam, to Abraham, and others, consequently it was God the Son, "the only be-"gotten of the Father," who then declared him, as well as afterwards, and was the God who appeared to those patriarchs.

therefore

therefore silent on this part of the subject. The same observation applies to the Baptism of our Saviour in the River Jordan. But on the declarations of the Baptist concerning himself, and his full and ample testimony that Jesus was "the Son of "God*,"—"the Lamb of God, which "taketh away the sin of the world†,"—on these circumstances, as they had been passed over by the others, he is full and exact. He adds also, that the Baptist declared that he knew not Jesus personally, but by divine intimation‡; confirmed by that miraculous appearance of the Holy Ghost§, which the other Evangelists had recorded, but to which he merely alludes. Thus, though the Evangelist John does not actually relate the Baptism of Jesus, because it had been told by his three predecessors, yet the principal circumstance in it, the visible appearance of the Holy

* John i. 34. † Ibid. i. 29. 36.
‡ Ibid. i. 33. § Ibid i. 32.

 Ghost,

Ghost, is fully confirmed by his testimony also; for he thus relates the words of the Baptist, "*and he bare record,*" saying, "I saw the Spirit of God descending "from Heaven like a dove, and it abode "upon him: And I knew him not: but "he that sent me to baptize with water, "the same said unto me, Upon whom "thou shalt see the Spirit descending "and remaining on him, the same is he "which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. "And I saw, and bare record, that this "is THE SON OF GOD*."

The Baptist twice says, "I knew him "not†,"—that is, I had no previous knowledge of him; but it is plain that when he first approached to receive baptism, John had a strong presentiment who he was, by his saying, "I have need "to be baptized of thee, and comest "thou to me‡?"—and this presentiment,

* John i. 32, 33, 34. † Ibid. i. 31. 33.
‡ Matt. iii. 14.

or

or secret suggestion, was fully confirmed by the predicted manifestation of the Holy Ghost. From this moment, the Baptist bore direct testimony to the Lord, in those most solemn words, "Behold the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the "sin of the world*.

At this period we find the history of the Evangelist St. John remarkably connected with his own personal knowledge of the facts. For he tells us, that on a second day, when the Baptist again bore strong testimony to Jesus, there were two of his (the Baptist's) disciples standing with him; when "looking on Jesus as he "walked, he said—Behold the Lamb of "God†;" upon which his two disciples immediately left him, and followed Jesus. This was the consequence of his own instructions, for he had said, "I am not the "Christ, but only the voice to prepare

* John i. 29. † Ibid. i. 20. 23.

 "the

" the way before him *." But who were these two disciples, who thus changed their master? St. John tells us expressly that " one of the two which heard John " speak and followed Jesus, was Andrew, " Simon Peter's brother †." Who the other was he says not, nor mentions any more about him. Whence the conclusion of all attentive readers, in all ages, has been, that it was John the Evangelist himself;—the beloved disciple,—who never

* It should not be overlooked that St. Paul, speaking to the Jews at Antioch, confirmed the accounts of the Evangelists, as to the preaching and declaration of John respecting Jesus. " Of " this man's [David's] seed hath God, according " to his promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, " Jesus; when John had first preached, before his " coming, the baptism of repentance to all the " people of Israel. And as John fulfilled his " course he said, whom think ye that I am? I am " not he. But behold there cometh one after me, " whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to " loose." Acts xiii. 23, 24, 25.

† John i. 40.

ver mentions himself by name, though he often writes his own personal testimony. This, as already noticed, is consonant to the practice of other sacred writers.

Thus do we learn an interesting fact in the history of the beloved disciple, that he was one of the very first who joined themselves to the Lord; and that he had been before a disciple of John the Baptist. That he was so, was of itself a testimony of his good disposition; since though multitudes flocked to the preaching and baptism of John, it is probable that only the most zealous and best disposed of his hearers became his constant followers, or disciples. That the calling of John happened in this way, is the more certain, because, we do not find it otherwise related, either by himself or by the other Evangelists; and certainly the calling of so distinguished an Apostle was not likely to be passed in total silence. It is further to be presumed that this conclusion is

right, because no other reason can well be conceived why St. John, mentioning expressly that one of the two was Andrew, should have said nothing of the other; except this reason of modesty, in not directly naming himself.

Another testimony borne by John the Baptist to Jesus, and recorded by the same Evangelist, shows us the manner in which the former instructed his followers. Some of them came and said to him, "Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond "Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, "behold the same baptizeth*, and all "men come unto him†." This was a fair opportunity for John completely to explain the difference between his own mission and that of Christ; and we find that he did not pass it by. He shows also that he had always made the same distinction,

* Not literally himself, but by his disciples; as the Evangelist explains afterwards. Chap. iv. 2.

† John iii. 26.

tinction, for his answer was, "A man can "receive nothing except it be given him "from Heaven*. Ye yourselves bear "me witness that I said, *I am not the* "CHRIST, but that I am sent before him. "He that hath the bride is the bride-"groom; but the friend of the bride-"groom, which standeth and heareth "him, rejoiceth greatly, because of the "bridegroom's voice; this my joy there-"fore is fulfilled. *He must increase,* "*but I must decrease.* He that cometh "from above *is above all.* He that is of "the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the "earth. *He that cometh from Heaven* "*is above all*†."

* John iii. 27.

† Is it possible more clearly to distinguish the superior origin and nature of Jesus; so superior in the opinion of even John the Baptist, whom Christ himself pronounced the greatest of all prophets? John was of the earth, and Christ was from Heaven. Yet say the Unitarians, he was *mere* man. That is, they know better than either John the Baptist, or John the Evangelist.

Is

Is not this testimony enough? Read then the concluding words of the voice which, by divine appointment, cried in the wilderness.

" And what he hath seen and heard he " testifieth, and no man receiveth his testi- " mony, (alluding to the perverseness of " the Jews.) He that hath received his " testimony has set to his seal that God " is true." How then is the truth of God concerned in it? for the reason immediately following. " For he whom God " hath sent *speaketh the words of God:* " for God giveth not the Spirit by mea- " sure unto him. The Father [God] " loveth his Son [Jesus] *and hath given* " *all things into his hand.*" What then is the conclusion? No less than this. " He that believeth on the Son hath ever- " lasting life: and he that believeth not " the Son shall not see life; but the wrath " of God abideth on him!" I tremble while I trace the words, for those who, reading

reading all this, will not believe him to be any thing more than a mere Son of Man. *The* Son of Man indeed he was by his own frequent avowal; but he was the Son of God also, by his positive and clear assertion, and in a sense which never was applied, nor can be applicable, to any other son of man.

An apparent difficulty arises from the circumstance mentioned by St. Matthew and St. Luke, that, when the fame of Jesus began to be spread throughout Judea, John the Baptist, then in prison, sent two of his disciples to him; saying, " Art " thou he that should come, or do we look " for another*?" Why, it has been asked, should he have sent to enquire, if he knew already, by divine intimation, and by a voice from Heaven, that Jesus was " *he that should come.*"

The common answer to this question

* Matt. xi. 2. Luke vii. 19.

seems

seems to be abundantly sufficient; namely, that John sent these disciples to satisfy *their* doubts, not any of his own; and that they might be eye-witnesses of the wonders that were reported. Or, if any one be dissatisfied with this, as founded upon mere conjecture, let him recollect that John was then closely confined, and might not feel quite certain, that the person of whom these things were reported was the very same whom he had baptized, and to whom he had borne testimony, on the banks of Jordan. Some impostor might have assumed his name, and might be deceiving the people. At all events, the surest way to obtain correct information, was to send competent persons to enquire into the real state of the case. Had there been any real contradiction between this fact, and the circumstances which John the Evangelist has related, in the early part of his narrative, he, who certainly wrote long after Matthew and Luke, and must have seen their accounts, had it fully in his power either to

to avoid or explain the difficulty. But knowing that there was no real inconsistency in the facts, the necessity of obviating such a suspicion did not occur to his mind. The unsuspecting seldom calculate upon being suspected.

The sudden and unjust execution of the Baptist in prison, was doubtless permitted by Providence for the wisest reasons. He had fulfilled his mission. He had prepared the way for THE LORD, who was now performing his own work. He was without doubt mature for that blessedness, to which he was removed by death. The minds of the people were no longer to be divided between two. They were to look to Jesus alone. The Baptist himself seems to have had intimation that his career was soon to be closed, when he said of Jesus, "He must increase, but I must "decrease." He died therefore, by the only martyrdom then to be attained, a martyr to the cause of truth and purity; because

because he had said to Herod "it is not "lawful for thee to have thy brother's "wife*."

It remains now only to observe, on the other hand, the testimony borne to John the Baptist, When the disciples abovementioned were gone away, Jesus began to question his own hearers upon the subject of John; and he concluded by declaring that he was not only a prophet, but even "more than a prophet. For" continued he, "this is he of whom it is "written, *Behold I send my messenger "before thy face, which shall prepare thy "way before thee* †." This was exactly what John had always said of himself, before he had any communication with Jesus ‡. The next words are still more remarkable, because they mark, not only the dignity of the Baptist, but also the great pre-eminence of the new dispensation,

* Matt. xiv. 4, and parallels. † Ibid. xi. 9, &c.
‡ Luke iii. 4. John i. 23.

tion, and, by implication, the still higher pre-eminence of Christ himself. "Verily "I say unto you, among them that are "born of women, there hath not risen a "greater prophet than John the Baptist; "notwithstanding, he that is least in the "kingdom of Heaven, [or of God] is "greater than he*." Our Lord marks also the separation between the two covenants, showing that John was the last prophet under the Law. "For all the "prophets and the Law prophesied until "John." He concludes by asserting, what we have seen asserted before, that John was the prophet termed Elias by Malachi. "And if ye will receive it, this "is Elias which was for to come." A similar testimony our Saviour bore again to his disciples, after the death of John, when they enquired of him concerning the coming of Elias, according to the doctrine of the Scribes, which they taught

* Matt. xi, and Luke vii. united.

from

from the prophecies. "I say unto you "that Elias is come already, and they "knew him not, but have done unto him "whatsoever they listed *." "Then," adds the Evangelist, "the disciples under-"stood that he spake unto them of John "the Baptist †." This comprehension, however, must have arisen chiefly from the recollection of things which Jesus had before said on the subject: for these words were hardly sufficient to convey it, without further illustration: whence we may fairly conclude, that the character and office of the Baptist were more frequently spoken of by our Saviour, than the Evangelists have recorded.

On the whole, such a character, as that of the Baptist was certainly not likely to be invented by any set of historians; and still less likely to have been assumed by any individual, for the purposes of fraud.

* Matt. xvii. 11. † Ibid. xvii. 3.

A life

A life of hardship in the desert, with a commission to announce the glory of another, not his own; these were objects not very inviting to the ambition of a man beginning his career; and though he was, for a short time, much honoured as a prophet, he plainly foresaw that he was soon to "decrease;" and his course was accordingly arrested by imprisonment, and terminated by a violent death. It is quite clear, from this representation, that John the Baptist actually lived for no other purpose but to call men to repentance, and to prepare them for the appearance of the LORD. That four writers should have agreed separately, or should have conspired together, to invent such a personage, if he had not really existed, is one of the most palpable impossibilities that can be imagined.

CHAP.

CHAPTER VI.

BIRTH AND INFANCY OF CHRIST.

THE miraculous circumstances preceding the birth of Christ are told exclusively by St. Matthew and St. Luke: those more remote by St. Luke, and those more immediate by St. Matthew. Both, however, agree that his mother was a virgin *; and both, that he was named *Jesus* before his birth, by angels; St. Luke relating it at the time of the vision seen by Mary †; and St. Matthew, in the later vision, vouchsafed to Joseph, to remove his doubts respecting his espoused wife ‡.

Certain nominal Christians, who reject

* Luke i. 26. Matt. i. 18. 23.
† Luke i. 31. ‡ Matt. i. 21.

the

the most fundamental doctrine of Christianity, the divine nature of the Redeemer, have endeavoured to throw the whole of these narratives into doubt or discredit, by denying the authenticity of the chief part of the first two chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke *. But their arguments are so futile and inconsistent, and have been so completely answered by various opponents †, that I shall here take leave to neglect them. To a person, who has no interest in making captious objections, it is sufficient proof of the authenticity of these chapters, that they are extant in all copies at present known, in all the most ancient versions, and are quoted and alluded to, as genuine, by Christian writers of almost every age. In correcting profane authors

* The persons alluded to are the editors of what they presume to style an *Improved Version* of the New Testament; but calculated, in fact, to undermine the faith of Christians.

† Dr. Laurence, Dr. Nares, and Mr. Rennell; also the Editors of the Quarterly Review, and others.

 some

some little latitude is allowed to ingenious conjecture, but, in the Sacred Writings, to alter a single word, without positive authority from manuscripts, is justly deemed unwarrantable. What then are we to think of the audacity which expunges whole chapters, on the surmised authority of some obscure heretics, endeavouring at the same time to elevate them into true Christians? It has been the practice of heretics, from the very earliest times, to endeavour to reject those books which contradicted their peculiar fancies; and the practice, we see, is not yet relinquished. The general testimony of the Church, however, has most powerfully overborne these partial and disgraceful attempts, and I hope will always have sufficient weight to produce the same effect. This then we may fairly disregard, as a desperate effort made in a desperate cause *.

St.

* The desperateness of the cause is strongly proved by the extravagance of the supposition. That

St. Matthew and St. Luke alone give any account of the birth of our Saviour, and of the circumstances preceding and following it. That all the historians of our Lord have been silent upon this subject, which would be the case if these chapters were expunged, is utterly incredible. The birth of an illustrious man, though nothing very remarkable attend it, is not usually passed over by his biographers. St. Luke is much more copious in this part of his narrative, but the manner of the agreement between him and St. Matthew, is more remarkable than the difference. St.

That any persons should have had the power, the opportunity, the audacity, or the impiety, to add or take out a single verse or sentence, in a work so closely watched, so justly revered, and so sacred in itself, as the New Testament, has with reason been thought extraordinary, and hardly credible. But that, at any period since the publication of the Gospels, whole chapters could have been foisted in, had even the impious wish been formed, nothing but the most bigotted *credulity of unbelief*, (if I may be allowed the expression), could possibly admit.

Matthew, in very few words, touches all the most important topics which St. Luke more diffusely relates. That the mother of Jesus was an espoused virgin, but not yet united to the man to whom she was betrothed. Both agree that her conception was a miracle, produced by the creative influence of the Holy Ghost. St. Luke relates the angelic salutation to Mary, which gave the first expectation of the wonderful event; St. Matthew the divine vision vouchsafed to Joseph, which removed his doubts and apprehensions. But the latter alone applies the celebrated prophecy of Isaiah, "Behold a Virgin "shall conceive, and bear a Son [1]."

This application demands particular notice, being a remarkable and undoubted instance of double sense in a prophecy; in the first sense, it applied to a child to be born in the time of Isaiah, and to be a sign to Ahaz of his deliverance from two

[1] Isaiah vii. 14.

invading

invading kings. In the latter, it referred to the Messiah. In the former birth there was nothing miraculous. The child was to be born of one who was a virgin when the prophecy was given, but not so afterwards. In the second, the mother was to be still a virgin when the child was born. The first application is marked by the limited time fixed by the prophet for the deliverance of the land. "Before the "child shall know to refuse the evil and "choose the good, the land shall be for-"saken of both her [rather *the*] kings [1]." The second application is marked, beyond all possibility of mistake, by the name *Immanuel,* which was never given to the first child, and which means, as St. Matthew interprets it, "God with us."

The nature of DOUBLE SENSES in genuine prophecy, how naturally they arise out of prophetic types, and how impossible it is for either to be imitated by false prophets,

[1] Isaiah vii. 15.

 I have

I have fully explained in the 3d and 4th sermons of my Warburtonian Lectures, to which I venture to refer the reader of this tract, for further satisfaction, on those important points. The doctrine of double senses has certainly had some strong opponents, but their reasons will hardly be convincing, to those who set a due value upon the authority and practice of the Evangelist St. Matthew.

That the birth of Jesus was miraculous, is then sufficiently proved by the concurring testimony of St. Matthew and St. Luke; and confirmed by the universal agreement of the Church, in all ages and countries, to call his mother, *the blessed Virgin*. That she always continued a virgin, has been also a very prevalent persuasion among Christians from the earliest times*; and if so, the persons called

* It is even made an Article of Faith in the Romish Church.

brethren

brethren and *sisters* of Jesus, in the Gospels, must have been children of Joseph by a former marriage, or other very near relations. But this appears to be of less importance. That Jesus was clearly descended from David, according to the prophecies, is sufficiently attested by these Evangelists.—Our Saviour also himself once intimated that David prophesied of him when he called him LORD; and the Jewish doctors understood him then to speak of the Messiah, the Son of David, which Jesus did not contradict[1]. This testimony, both to his own dignity, and to his relationship to David, was thought important by three of the Evangelists, who have related it almost in the same words.

It is not a little remarkable how very few events, relating to the infancy of

[1] Matt. xxii. 24. Mark xii. 36. Luke xx. 42.

 Jesus,

Jesus, the Evangelists have thought it necessary to record. St. Mark and St. John pass over the subject entirely, and begin with his public ministry; St. Matthew and St. Luke supply a few circumstances, in themselves sufficiently remarkable, but among them all, only one that can be considered as a personal action of Jesus; and that is, his conversing with the doctors in the Temple, at the age of twelve * years.

The fact, beyond all doubt, was, that, in his earlier years, he performed no miracles; nor exhibited any thing likely to distinguish him, except that habitual course of good conduct to all, which made him, "as he increased in wisdom and stature, "to increase also in favour with God and "man †." But "he increased *in wisdom*."

* Luke, only, ii. 40—52.

† Luke, suprà.

How

How was that, if he was from the first a divine person? How it was we shall never know, till it be revealed to us, perhaps, in another world. But the fact seems undoubted, that as an infant he was like other infants; as a child, like other children, evil propensities excepted; nor could he have been truly said to have been made man, or to have partaken the general properties of human nature, had it been otherwise. He performed no miracle till after his baptism in Jordan, with which his public ministry commenced; and that which he performed at the marriage in Cana is expressly called, by St. John [1], "the beginning of miracles *.

[1] John ii. 11.

* His fast of forty days in the wilderness, which seems to have preceded this, was certainly miraculous; but it was not an act of his own. It was a suffering, which he was divinely empowered to bear, as mere human prophets had been in other instances. Moses fasted forty-days. Exodus xxiv. 18, and again Deut. ix. 18. Daniel twenty-one days, x. 2, 3.

All this, I say, is perfectly consistent, when we consider it in the proper light; but it is what no one could have conceived before-hand, and consequently what no human being would ever have invented. The inventions of men are consonant to the general ideas of men; and a personage so extraordinary as the expected Messiah, had he been described according to human imaginations, would infallibly have had an infancy and youth as extraordinary as his manhood afterwards proved; or at least such as should clearly have announced what his manhood was to be.

So predominant was this feeling, that, even after the truth had been published to the world, some Christians, (not ill meaning, perhaps) could not be at rest, till they had invented histories of Christ's infancy, and of his early youth. Two or three Apocryphal Gospels are still extant, and many more once existed, pretending to supply, what the authors doubtless considered

sidered as a defect in the genuine Gospels. Of these fictitious books, one called the "*Pre-Gospel,*" [πρωΐευαγγελίον] is pretended, in the book itself, to be written by St. James, the brother of Christ, and first Bishop of Jerusalem. Another, "the "Gospel of Infancy," is attributed to St. Thomas*. Both these abound with such absurd, nonsensical, and almost blasphemous fictions, as show most strikingly the difference between the modesty of truth, and the wildness of human imaginations. These clumsy forgers have not even attended to what the genuine Gospels told them, nor have in the least caught the spirit of those divine histories. They represent our Lord not only as per-

* These, and other spurious works, and fragments of the same kind, have been collected and published, in Greek and Latin, so far as they can be recovered, by that most learned and laborious man *Jo. Albert Fabricius;* under the title of "Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti," a useful work for scholars, but neither capable nor worthy of translation.

 forming

forming miracles in his infancy and childhood, but such miracles as he never performed in his actual ministry; miracles for punishment and revenge of offences. These legends would indeed be wholly unworthy of notice, but that, by the contrast, they curiously illustrate the truth of the authentic Gospels; and show of what nature fiction would have been, had it had any admission into the history of Jesus. If the forgers who had the Evangelists before them could not learn to do better, what would have been the inventions of illiterate Jews, without any such models to follow?

The things which St. Matthew and St. Luke have related, concerning this period of our Saviour's life, are few, but very important. His miraculous conception and birth, with the circumstances attending each[1]; his nativity at Bethlehem[2], and the reasons for it; the ado-

[1] Luke ii. [2] Matt. ii. 13. 23.

ration

ration of the shepherds and the Magi; the apprehensions of Herod respecting a child said to be born *King of* the Jews; the flight into Egypt; the rage of Herod at being baffled; and the consequent murder of the male children * at Bethlehem. The return of Joseph and his family after the death of Herod, and their establishment at Nazareth.

The circumstances told by St. Luke alone[1], illustrative of the extraordinary wisdom which appeared in the child Jesus, at the age of twelve, are in many respects remarkable, but in none extrava-

* The masculine article added to the Greek word signifying children, [τοὺς παῖδας] shows plainly that the male infants only were slain. Why indeed should he have put the females to death? They could not be kings of Israel. This however ought to be marked in translations. Learned men have pointed out that this extraordinary cruelty of Herod is noticed by a heathen author, *Macrobius.*

[1] Luke ii. 40—52.

gant.

gant. There is no miracle performed, no premature declaration of his yet concealed dignity. But the love of his parents to him, their great anxiety for his safety, his general submission to them, and the entire singularity of the instance, in which he even seemed to have done any thing that could give them concern, are all most strongly intimated in the narrative. The gentle reproof of Mary, "why hast thou "dealt thus with us? Thy father and I "have sought thee sorrowing," implies every thing most amiable both in parents and child. While the ambiguous answer of Jesus*, without having any thing petulant in it, intimates a consciousness of his divine origin; and must have left an excellent subject for meditation in the

* The words, in the Greek, may signify equally, "knew ye not that I must be *in my Father's* "*House*," meaning the Temple, or "*about my* "*Father's business.*" Our English translators have preferred the latter, some others the former; but the choice seems not very material.

minds

minds of his parents, one of whom, at least, applied them to that use; for so the Evangelist has said. After this, we have no notice of the personal actions or discourses of Jesus, till the commencement of his public ministry.

CHAP.

CHAPTER VII.

PUBLIC MINISTRY OF CHRIST.

We are now to fix our eyes upon the Saviour, in the exercise of his ministerial office; and in what we may call his *probationary* state upon earth. Let not any reader be alarmed at the latter expression. The mysterious union of the divine nature with the human, it would be presumptuous to attempt to explain, or even to hope to comprehend; because the Scriptures have no where explained it. But that, notwithstanding this incomprehensible union, the human nature of Jesus underwent probation or trial, is beyond all possibility of doubt. Nor was the Man Christ Jesus fully glorified, till this trial

trial had been completed by his passion and death.

The inspired writer to the Hebrews says expressly of him, that "he was in all "points tempted like as we are, yet without sin[1]." But we have it also from a still greater authority, even from Christ himself. "Ye," said he to his disciples, "are they which have continued with me "in my Temptations[2]." Nor was he glorified, as the Messiah of God, till this trial was accomplished. "The Holy "Ghost," says St. John, "was not yet "given, because that Jesus was not yet "glorified[3]." The very first scene of his public life, the temptation in the wilderness, was a severe trial; and the last, from its immense importance, in atoning for the sins of all mankind, was so severe, that the human sufferer, meek and patient as he was, humbly prayed, in his

[1] Heb. iv. 15. [2] Luke xxii. 28. [3] John vii. 39.

agony,

agony, that if it were possible, that cup might pass from him*. Shaken as he was, beyond the powers of human nature to bear, so that "an angel from heaven "appeared unto him[1], strengthening "him†," yet even in those circumstances he was all submission and resignation, and the glorious work was thus at length completed.

* He had spoken of this trial with horror, even long before. Luke xii. 50.

[1] Luke xxii. 43.

† Then it was that "being in an agony, he pray- "ed more earnestly: and his sweat was, as it were "great drops of blood falling down to the ground." v. 44. It is perfectly absurd to suppose that this prodigious agony was occasioned by the mere apprehension of death, which, except by the gift of prophecy, he could not even then foresee; it *must* have arisen from other causes, connected with the greatness and difficulty of the work in which he was employed. Such fear, in a mere man, would have rendered him contemptible; such agony, in the Son of God, shows, beyond all doubt, how difficult it is to atone for sins.

Certain

Certain it is, though not in general sufficiently attended to, that our Saviour, while on earth, established no new covenant. All that he then performed was merely preparatory. He did not himself baptize any one; [John iv. 2, as above] and the baptism conferred by his disciples was merely a baptism of repentance, like that of John the Baptist. It was not till after his Resurrection, that he authorized his Apostles to baptize, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. It was not till after his ascension into heaven, that he baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire, as the Baptist had foretold of him, and he himself had promised. He called no Jew from his subjection to the Law of Moses; on the contrary, he himself submitted to it, throughout his Life; the very last portion of which was partly employed in a solemn celebration of the Mosaic passover, with his disciples. He could not more decisively declare himself subject to the Mosaic

saic covenant, to the very end of his mortal career. It is true that he then instituted one of his own Sacraments, but it was in contemplation of his immediate death; and he declared it, at the time, to be intended as a commemoration of it.

This observation is a key to many things which occasionally perplex the minds of readers, who have not discovered or attended to it. Though Jesus was the undoubted descendant of David, foretold by the Prophets as the Messiah, the king of Israel, he never, on that account, assumed any personal distinction or authority. When pressed upon the question by Pilate, he avowed that he *was* the King of the Jews, but added, "My kingdom is not "of this world; if it were, then would "my servants fight[1]." That is, my kingdom is not such as the kingdoms of this world: "it is not from hence[2]."

[1] John xviii. 36. [2] Ibid.

When

When the people would have seized him, in a tumultuous manner, to make him a king, he withdrew himself from them, and retired to a mountain alone[1]. Once only, and that a very short time before his death, he thought fit to enter Jerusalem in his prophetic character of King of Israel, but without any resemblance of worldly pomp, and exactly as had been foretold of him, "meek, and riding upon "an ass." Nor did the ebullition of the people, on that occasion, go to any further excess than that of cutting down branches of palms, to strew in the way, and shouting *Hosanna*, with other innocent demonstrations of joy and respect[2]. This was all the worldly homage that he ever consented to receive.

This remarkable event is told by all the Evangelists; but St. John alone, who wrote last, gives us the explanation of it; and this explanation is even more

[1] John vi. 15.

[2] Matt. xxi. Mark xi. Luke xix. John xii.

extra-

extraordinary than the event itself. Marked as this final entry into Jerusalem was, with all the circumstances of the prophetic descriptions, his disciples, says St. John, did not at the time understand it; but "when Jesus was glorified," that is, after his resurrection and ascension, "then re-"membered they that these things were "written of him, and that they had done "these things unto him [1]." Jesus, however, himself was fully conscious of their great importance, for when the Pharisees requested him to rebuke his disciples and followers, for their tumultuous applause, he replied, with firm dignity, "I tell you "that if these should hold their peace the "stones would immediately cry out [2]."

But this public acknowledgment, or assertion, if you please, of his proper dignity, as the expected Messiah, was not accompanied or followed by any claim or pretence of worldly power. No; when he

[1] John xii. 16. [2] Luke xix. 40.

had

had shown himself to the Jews, as the prophets foretold he would, "meek, and "riding on an ass," he still more meekly withdrew himself again from the enthusiasm of the people; and in the performance of his final offices of devotion, awaited the death which his adversaries, blindly fulfilling the words of the Prophets, had conspired to bring upon him.

Thus then we see the reason why, after some of his remarkable miracles, Jesus withdrew himself from public observation. Why, in many instances, he required of those whom he had healed, to tell no man what God had done for them. He feared the violence of the people, lest they should espouse his cause in a tumultuous manner, or take him by force, as once they actually thought of doing, to make him a king. The very tumult of joy, on his entry into Jerusalem, (for it was attended by no *violence*) was occasioned, says St. John, by the publicity of his miracle of raising Lazarus.

zarus. "It was," says he, "the people, "that was with him when he called La- "zarus out of the grave, and raised him "from the dead, who bare record[1]." "For this cause," he further adds, speaking of the Jewish multitude in general, "the people also met him, for that they "had heard that he had done this mi- "racle." This he permitted, because things were now ripe for their final and solemn issue. It did, in fact, bring on that final issue, by exciting the heavy displeasure of the pharisees, chief priests, and scribes; who said among themselves, "Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? "behold the world is gone after him[2]." When to this offence were added, immediately after, his miracles of mercy in the temple, his healing the lame and the blind, who were brought to him, they lost all patience. "And when the chief priests and scribes "saw the wonderful things that he did,

[1] John xii. 17, 18. [2] John xii. 19.

and

"and the children crying in the temple, "and saying Hosanna to the Son of Da- "vid; *they were sore displeased*[1], and "said unto him, Hearest thou what these "say?" Nor can there be a doubt, that the answer of Jesus, mild as it was, greatly increased their displeasure; because it put in a direct claim to the very title thus bestowed, by applying to him one of the prophecies, well-known to point to the Messiah, "Jesus saith unto them, yea; "have ye never read, *out of the mouths* "*of babes and sucklings thou hast per-* "*fected praise*[2]."

In the same considerations, we find also a full explanation of our Lord's conduct towards those scribes and others, who directly enquired of him the means of attaining eternal life. He called them not out of the Jewish church, nor told them that they were to be at present under any

[1] John xii. 15, 16. [2] John xii. 16.

 new

new covenant. He merely instructed them to fulfil the great and general duties of the law; and, if they appeared worthy of more favour, to give up their worldly property, and to follow him *. They would then have become his disciples, a class at some times very numerous, but lessened occasionally by offence taken at words or actions of Jesus, which happened not to accord with their previous expectations. But still they were only to *wait* for that kingdom of God which, till after his passion, continued merely to approach. Such disciples were perfectly distinct from the twelve Apostles, who from the first had a peculiar vocation, and a peculiar office.

It is necessary thus to anticipate some of the last acts of our Saviour's ministry, that we may more fully understand his conduct from the first. He was not com-

* As the ingenuous young man in Mark x. 17.

pletely glorified till after his passion *, as the Evangelists have told us more than once; and had he in his agony in the garden prayed, without reserve or submission to the divine will, that the bitter cup then presented to him should be removed, removed it would have been; but, as man, he never would have been glorified. Had he, when seized by the Jewish power prayed, as he might have done, for legions of angels to rescue him, the angels would have come, but the Man Christ Jesus would never have been glorified. For, as he asked, at the time, "how then "should the Scriptures have been ful-"filled, that so it must be [1]?" St. John indeed tells us that he then again alluded to the dreadful cup. "The cup which "my Father hath given me, shall I not "drink it [2]?"

* His transfiguration was only a foretaste, or representation of his approaching glory.

[1] Matt. xxvi. 54. [2] John xviii. 11.

Whether then we understand the reason of it or not, such was the fact, that the human character of Christ could only be made perfect by undergoing the predicted sufferings; and that, if he had refused to complete the task he undertook, our case would have been the same as if he had never undertaken it. Nor was he, till after his resurrection, the Saviour of mankind, nor qualified to found a new dispensation, in the place of the Mosaic covenant. His personal mission was indeed confined to the Jewish nation, according to the prophecies, as he himself declared, "I am not sent but unto the "lost sheep of the house of Israel[1]." The first preaching of his Apostles was directed to the same objects; but when the Jews "rejected the grace of God, and "deemed themselves unworthy of ever-"lasting life[2]," then it was that the door

[1] Matt. xv. 24. [2] Acts xiii. 46.

was

was opened to the Gentiles, that is, to all mankind.

I am not writing a history of our Lord, nor any thing resembling a history, the order therefore in which I notice the circumstances has no particular limitation. My object is to show, from general considerations, that the character of Jesus was such as no men could possibly have invented; nor could indeed have conceived, without the pattern of truth, from which to draw and describe it. Here then is one of those points utterly inconceivable in, and inadmissible into, any human contrivance. Here is a plan, which could only be completed by the murder of the chief agent in it; who could not begin to found his Church, or Kingdom, call it which you please, till after he was dead; who not only could not do it, but did not even attempt it, and declared positively that he would not!

 Where

Where shall we find mortal agents to devise, conduct, or execute such a design? Would not any human creature have supposed that the ignominious death of the founder, must have been the end rather than the beginning of his triumph? and where should a man have been found, to take upon him such a task, and to pursue it to its fatal termination?

But Jesus, fore-knowing all that was to happen to him, and distinctly foretelling it, attempted not to baptize with the baptism peculiar to him, till after his trial had been completed by death, and "all power "had been given to him in heaven and in "earth[1]." Then it was that, immediately before he was taken from his disciples into heaven, he gave them the promise of receiving that baptism, within a few days; alluding, even then, to the predic-

[1] Matt. xxviii. 18.

tions

tions of John the Baptist, who had foretold this of him. "For John," said he, "truly baptized with water; but ye shall "be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not "many days hence[1]:" which was accordingly fulfilled, in the most public manner. Such promises, what man could have made; such promises, what man could have performed?

[1] Acts i. 5.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE BAPTISM AND TEMPTATION OF JESUS.

THAT Jesus was baptized by John, we have already seen, and that the Voice of God bore witness, on that occasion, to his dignity, as his beloved Son, "in whom he "was well pleased." The circumstances are told by all the Evangelists. More fully by *Matthew*, rather more briefly by *Mark* and *Luke*; and, in an allusion only to the principal fact, by *St. John*. But their differences are those of men perfectly consistent in the same general account.

Immediately after his baptism, he being then, as St. Luke says, full of the Holy Ghost, succeeded his peculiar trial or temptation

temptation in the wilderness. The three first Evangelists agree in this account, though Mark is much more concise in his narrative than the two others. John is silent upon it, probably because it had been sufficiently related by them.

Of a transaction wholly preternatural, what can we say, by way of explanation? Three men, three good and holy men, bearing record at different times, and in distant places, agree to testify that so it was. That Jesus was carried by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness; and that there, during a miraculous fast of forty days, he resisted the snares of the chief of evil spirits. That he was then in a state of trial, is therefore undeniable. We see also that the trial was difficult, and that the Angels of Heaven were attentive to it, and delighted with the successful issue of it[1]. The contest appears to have been

[1] Matt. iv. 11. Mark i. 13.

against that very Being who beguiled our first parents. It was therefore the triumph of man, in the person of Jesus, against the corrupter and destroyer of man. It was the seed of the woman, (Mary,) bruising the head of the serpent, according to the original promise. As for those who would make it an allegory or a vision, if they can satisfy their own minds by it, we must leave them to enjoy their satisfaction; but clearly there is nothing, in any of the three accounts of the Gospels, which suggests, or even countenances, such an interpretation. This, however, we must be allowed to say; that they who cannot believe either angel or devil, are very ill calculated to believe the Gospel, which abounds with the agencies of both. They are fitter to be Sadducees among the Jews; or philosophers, among those, whose scanty faith is limited to such objects as have nothing in them extraordinary, or may be testified by their own senses.

That

That a large part of these forty days was filled up by pious meditation and prayer, and employed in mental preparation for the great work immediately after to commence, is highly probable*. By what mysterious mode of union the divine nature was, in Christ, thus blended with the human, it is vain to conjecture, as it is not any where revealed; but that as man he was truly man, and liable to fail through human infirmity, appears from various parts of the history. That he did not fail, was his merit, his triumph, his glory, and the subject of his exaltation, as man.—That he who was then on earth was also at the same time in heaven, seems inti-

* If imagination may be allowed to fill up this extraordinary scene, the sublime Poem of *Paradise Regained*, though never a public favourite, may happily perform the office. When Christianity itself shall be more popular (if I may hazard the expression) that Poem will have more admirers: though it cannot either have or deserve so many as the *Paradise Lost*.

 mated

mated by Christ himself, in his discourse with Nicodemus [1]. He might also be in other worlds innumerable, performing other works of infinite love and goodness [*]; for who shall limit omnipotence and omnipresence? This however is evident, that, in his incarnation on earth, when he made himself man, he made himself truly man. How that could be, he only can disclose.

[1] John iii. 13. See Ellesley.

[*] See my excellent relation Dr. Nares's work entitled, Εἷς Θεὸς εἷς Μεσίτης.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CALLING OF THE APOSTLES.

THE first care of our blessed Lord, after his return from the wilderness, seems to have been the choice of his Apostles. The two first, as we have already noticed, were disciples of John the Baptist, who, hearing his testimony respecting Jesus, immediately desired to follow him as their Lord, and received accordingly his gracious invitation [1]. By their being already followers of the Baptist it appears, that they were men disposed to obey the call to repentance, and to seek salvation, by the best means they could discover. When John, whom they believed to be a prophet,

[1] John i. 37, &c.

bore

bore witness that Jesus was, beyond all comparison, greater than himself, and would baptize with the Holy Ghost, they immediately desired to join themselves to this person of superior excellence. One of these was *Andrew*, Simon Peter's brother, and the other, as we have seen, was, most probably, *John* the Evangelist; so that we have the account from the very first hand. Andrew immediately fetched his brother *Simon:* and they passed the remainder of that day with the Lord [1]. On the following day, *Philip* was called, and *Nathanael;* generally supposed to be the same who was afterwards called *Bartholomew* [2].

It appears, however, that these Apostles were not yet so entirely called to attendance upon Jesus, as to relinquish their ordinary occupations. For at a later period we find him calling them from their fishing

[1] John i. 39. [2] Ibid. 43, &c.

boats,

boats, and working a miracle to confirm them in their resolution to abandon their occupation [1]. The miracle, which is that of the miraculous draught of fishes, is related exclusively by St. Luke [2]; but the other circumstances are common to the three Evangelists. We may observe, however, that when Jesus went into Simon's ship, he went as to a person already known to him, and without particular introduction. Of the three Apostles, here mentioned, Simon, James, and John, the first had been made known to Jesus before. Andrew also, Peter's brother, was probably joined with James and John, who are said to have been partners with him, as fishermen [3]. From this time, we may presume, they entirely left their secular calling, and were constantly in attendance upon their Lord and Master. The calling of *Matthew*, or *Levi*, the

[1] Matt. iv. 18. Mark i. 16. Luke v. 1.
[2] Luke v. 3—10. [3] Luke v. 10.

publican,

publican, happened not long after, and is told by himself, as well as others[1].

Of the calling of the other disciples, besides these seven, *(Simon, Andrew, Philip, Nathanael, James, John,* and *Matthew,)* we have no particular account; but they are all soon after enumerated together, with the addition of *Thomas*[2], *James,* the son of Alpheus, *Lebbeus,* surnamed Thaddeus*, *Simon* the Canaanite, and *Judas* Iscariot. In which lists this is remarkable, that Philip is constantly joined with *Bartholomew,* which confirms the conjecture that the latter was the very *Nathanael* whom Philip invited to Christ; and either the brother, or the particular friend of Philip. As some other Apostles are also mentioned

[1] Matt. ix. 9. Mark ii. 14. Luke v. 27.
[2] Matt. x. 2. Mark iii. 16. Luke vi. 14.

* Called also *Judas* or Jude, the brother of the *James* last mentioned. See Acts i. 13.

under

under two names, this conjecture acquires the more probability.

Here let us briefly ask ourselves a question, which has indeed been frequently asked, but should not at this time be wholly past by. Would any human teacher so have chosen his principal supporters and attendants? Jesus must already have attracted the notice of some considerable persons. Those who were present at the marriage feast in Cana, were probably not of any inferior class. Such do not usually, in any country, either give nuptial feasts, or receive invitations to them. The nobleman of Capernaum, who believed him on his word, and received the life of his son as a reward for his faith[1]; and even Nicodemus, though "a master of Israel[2]," and afraid of being put out of his situation, might probably have been won over to an open declaration of their faith, had Jesus condescended

[1] John iv. 50. [2] Ibid. iii. 10.

to

to work a miracle for that purpose. These, and such as these, were the instruments that any mere man would have sought to employ; and they were just the persons whom Jesus would not choose. He wanted no aid either from human wisdom or human power. They would even have been suspicious instruments. Plain integrity, and honest simplicity were the qualifications which he sought; and he found them more easily in the fishing vessels of the sea of Galilee, than in the banquetting rooms or splendid houses on the shore.

One alone, out of the twelve, proved unworthy of his choice, and he was to act a tremendous part, well suited to his depraved character. That he was at last a consummate hypocrite appears from his speech about the precious ointment*: and

* "Why was not this ointment sold for three "hundred pence and given to the poor? This he "said,"

and depraved he must have been, in the highest degree of mental corruption, who could follow such a master for sinister motives, see such miracles without being overawed, and hear such discourses without being touched at the heart! His hypocrisy doubtless deceived others, for the time, Jesus it could not possibly deceive. [John vi. 64.] But he chose him, because for an evil work an evil instrument must be found: and he thought fit to show how wickedness and hypocrisy can work out their own destruction, even with all the means of salvation within their reach! That Jesus was not deceived

"said," adds St. John, "not that he cared for the "poor, but because he was a thief, and had the "bag, and bare what was put therein." *John* xii. 5, 6. St. John probably knew not this at the time, but afterwards, when the character of the traitor had been developed. Avarice seems to have been his besetting sin, for in the last instance he sold his master. It is no great encomium of money, that the care of the bag was entrusted to such a personage.

in

in him, is plain from his saying, at an early period, "Have not I chosen you "twelve[1], and one of you is a devil*?" Dishonesty, avarice, hypocrisy, ingratitude, treachery, these qualities at least he had, and they are sufficient to make up a character in no small degree diabolical. Of the reform of such a heart, there could be little hope, and the perdition of Judas Iscariot, could hardly be aggravated by the final consummation of his villainy. Yet granting to our Lord, either by natural or supernatural means, the power of detecting the real character of Judas, as we find he did, would he have continued such a man among his followers, had he not had very different views from those of men in general? namely, the view of fulfilling the prophecies, even by the sacrifice of his own life. It is most probable however, that Judas was not a depraved

[1] John vi. 70.

* The Evangelist, probably, in this case as in the other, knew not the whole truth, till afterwards.

character

character at the time of his calling, but gradually became so, by giving up his mind to worldly, instead of heavenly views, founded on the power of his master; and through impatience that those views had not been more quickly gratified.

Of all the Apostles, *Levi*, or Matthew, was, as far as we know, the only one who was called from a thriving worldly situation; though, at the same time, one which was considered as infamous in the eyes of his countrymen. It was that of a publican, or receiver of taxes for the Romans; and his wealth may be presumed from the great feast which he gave at his own house[1], to publicans and others, when he was about to quit their fraternity[2]. Neither his wealth nor his occupation appears to have corrupted his heart. His modesty and humility were exemplary; since, in relating the fact of his calling, he speaks of himself in the third person, merely as "a man

[1] Luke v. 29. [2] Matt. ix. 10.

"named

" named Matthew[1]," and says nothing of his relinquishing any lucrative office for Christ's sake ; it is St. Luke only who tells us that " he left all ;" and as to the great feast which he gave, Matthew says merely of it, that they were sitting at meat in his house. Few, who have written of their own actions, have ever been so reserved.

But of all the twelve, no one appears to be more worthy of notice and admiration than John, the beloved of his Lord, which is surely the highest encomium ; the most explicit asserter of his divinity ; the supplier of discourses and events omitted by the three other Evangelists ; the writer not only of a Gospel, but of three Epistles, in which his amiable spirit shines forth with increased lustre ; reserved, according to the explicit promise of his Blessed Master, to witness his coming again in judgment upon the Jewish nation ; and surviving even that, to close the canon of the Holy

[1] Matt. ix. 9.

Scrip-

Scriptures by a prophetic book, connecting them with the end of the world, and even with the day of Judgment, and a period far beyond that day. To John, therefore, the first called, probably*, and the latest preserved of the Apostles, distinguished in so many ways, I cannot but look with love and reverence, as the chief of the whole number ; though Peter, from the interest of a sect, has been exalted to a pre-eminence not intended to be given by our Lord to any Apostle. He even explicitly refused to name a chief among them, and silenced their disputes on that subject by a powerful lesson of humility.

The sons of Zebedee, *James* and *John*, were certainly distinguished among the attendants of the Lord ; and it was probably a perception of the favour shown to these *sons of thunder*,[1], (as Christ himself had named them) which led their

* See above, p. 110.

[1] Mark iii. 17.

mother

mother into the presumption of requesting that they might sit on the right hand and on the left of their Lord in his kingdom. Notwithstanding this, they continued in favour, and James was afterwards distinguished by being one of the three permitted to behold the transfiguration of their Lord. When St. Paul was miraculously called to the place and dignity of an Apostle, and particularly commissioned as the Apostle of the Gentiles, he said of himself, that he presumed he "was in no respect behind "the chiefest of the Apostles;" and when we recollect that he withstood Peter to his face, and even pronounced him to be wrong *, we cannot have much respect for that pre-eminence of Peter, which is attributed to him by those, who would found their own authority upon it.

It should be observed, that there were

* "I withstood him, because he was to be "blamed." *Galat.* ii. 11.

many

many persons called disciples, who were not Apostles, and that some of these were nearly, if not quite, as constant in their attendance upon the Lord, as the Apostles themselves. Out of this number, it was particularly proposed by St. Peter that the two should be chosen, who were to be candidates for supplying the place of *Judas Iscariot*, after the fatal termination of his wicked career. The number of these, including the eleven, amounted at that time to about an hundred and twenty [1], whom the Apostle describes as men "who "had companied with them, all the time "that the Lord Jesus was with them [2], be-"ginning from the baptism of John, unto "the day when he was taken up into hea-"ven from them." These were men particularly tried; for there were times, when offended at some of his discourses "many "of his disciples *went back*, and walked "no more with him [3]:" The seventy

[1] Acts i. 15. [2] Ibid. 21, 22. [3] John vi. 66.

 disciples

disciples, whom our Lord sent out two by two, to the cities which he intended to visit, were probably also of this faithful number, since our Lord told them that "their names were written in heaven[1]."

Out of these approved disciples, when the election of a new Apostle was to take place, the eleven selected two, *Joseph* called *Barsabas*, and also surnamed *Justus*, and *Matthias*; when, by a divine direction of the lot, the latter was finally chosen[2]. It is most probable, that both had been of the number of the seventy; and that both were highly qualified for the office, since the Apostles would not pretend to decide between them, without divine assistance. Thus was the appointed number of twelve again filled up; which would have remained for ever unaltered, no human power presuming to interfere in what Christ had appointed, had not Jesus himself

[1] Luke x. 20. [2] Acts i. 26.

self personally appointed and qualified Paul to be a thirteenth Apostle, namely, *the Apostle of the Gentiles*. To him Christ appeared in person, on his journey to Damascus, and on other occasions; to him he condescended to speak; and, by divine visions, informed him fully of all those facts, which the other Apostles knew by the evidence of their senses, and the testimony of their divinely assisted memory. Much evidence of divine power appears in all these transactions, but they form a part of the subject with which we are not at present concerned. I return to the contemplation of our Lord's own ministry.

CHAPTER X.

MIRACLES OF OUR LORD.

WHOEVER takes a collective view of all the miracles of our Lord, recorded in the Gospels, will see abundant evidence that human invention had no part whatever in making out the list. None of them dictated by vanity, or the love of glory, none suggested by any human passions or local prejudices. All, or nearly all, directed by the purest benevolence, to remove or alleviate the sufferings of the miserable. I say boldly, and without fear of receiving any rational contradiction, that the miracles of our Lord are such as no human creature, writing an imaginary history, would ever have invented or feigned. The miracles themselves, if they were supposed

supposed by the spectators to happen, must have been real; for they are of such a nature that no possible delusion could have been practised in them: sudden and public cures of all the most inveterate disorders, defects, and maladies, mental and bodily; and sometimes, even restoration of life. But supposing that there could be a doubt, which there cannot, that our Lord performed such works, I say that no human writer that ever lived would have invented them.

For proof of this, look at all the miracles which have ever owed their supposed existence to human invention. Examine the false Gospels, or the extravagant legends of the Romish saints; read the fables of St. Francis of Assise, or of Ignatius Loyola, and say what you there find. Are they not, for the most part, childish inventions, destitute, not only of probability but of dignity? Some are intended, manifestly, to support a particular opinion, or the interests of particular men; yet in themselves are totally

tally incredible. Others, better testified, are such as might easily have been contrived by art or collusion *. Yet all these were obtruded upon the world, long after the genuine miracles of the Gospels had been published. These miracle-mongers therefore had not even the good sense, or good taste, (if we may so speak) to see what real miracles ought to be; to catch even a shadow of the dignity and propriety of our Lord's miraculous actions. If then human inventors bungled thus, with not only the Gospels, but the history of the Apostles before them as examples, what would they have done if the subject had come under their hands new and untouched. Doubtless their attempts would have been even more miserable, if more could be, than these are seen to be.

What men ever lived, before the Evan-

* See the *Criterion*, by the late Bp. Douglas: a most entertaining, as well as acute and excellent work; republished in 1807, by his son the Rev. W. Douglas, Prebendary of Westminster, &c.

gelists,

gelists, into whose minds it would have entered, that the proper dignity of such a superior being, as the Son of God, should consist in mildness, benevolence, and mercy; in working miracles of mercy only; in pardoning insults, and forbearing to hurt his enemies? Certain it is, beyond all doubt, that his Apostles and Evangelists would not have had such ideas, had they not been so instructed by the conduct of their Master. Nor did they learn this holy lesson with ease; since two of the most favoured among them, the brothers James and John, the latter afterwards an Evangelist, were the very persons who exhorted Jesus to permit them to work a miracle of vengeance, by calling down fire from heaven, to destroy a village of the Samaritans, which had refused to receive them. They even justified their wish by the example of a prophet *, which must have given them full confidence in

* Elias, i. e. Elijah.

 the

the propriety of it. Memorable, indeed, was the answer and rebuke of their Lord, and such as fully showed how little they had entered as yet into the nature of his character, or the design of his miracles. "Ye "know not," said he, "what manner of "spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man "is not come to destroy men's lives, but "to save them[1]."

Such a character had, indeed, been foretold of the true Messiah. "Behold my "servant whom I uphold, mine elect in "whom my soul delighteth: I have put "my spirit upon him.—He shall not cry, "nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be "heard in the street. A bruised reed "shall he not break, and the smoking "flax shall he not quench[2]." But who had noticed this sacred character? Certainly not the Apostles, at that period: not even the most favoured among them.

[1] Luke ix. 55, 56. [2] Is. xlii. 2, 3.

St.

St. Matthew indeed refers to it afterwards, as characterizing his Lord[1]; but that was when he had become an Evangelist; when he had seen that Divine Instructor's meekness to the end, under trials the most severe; and when he had himself received the illumination of that same Spirit, which in Jesus abounded beyond measure. Mildness and benevolence would never have entered spontaneously into the idea of a superior character, in the mind of any human creature. Dignity was always supposed to be mixed with more or less of haughtiness; superior virtue with unrelenting severity: and so, I hesitate not to assert, they would infallibly have been represented, by any man, living in any country, at the period of our Saviour's death; if he had drawn the picture from his own fancy, or from his preconceived notions of fitness and propriety.

Yet we have here not only one writer,

[1] Matt. xii. 18.

 but

but four, of a nation not particularly disposed to mildness and forbearance, who all unite in giving to their Lord a character of unalterable gentleness, forbearance, and benevolence; and to his miracles the same stamp and spirit *.

The miracles of our Lord, if we consider only those which are recorded at large, are about forty in number; if we were to estimate the several instances in which we are told that he healed multitudes, who flocked to him with various diseases, they would be beyond number; especially since St. John tells us, that many more were performed than are in any way recorded. Yet nearly all these were miracles of mercy. They were calculated, not only to relieve the present sufferings of those who labour-

* The first miracle of severity was that which punished Ananias for his fraud. Acts v. 5. Not one of that kind was wrought by Christ himself. They were afterwards very rare. Works, not of choice, but necessity.

ed

ed under disease, but for the still more merciful purpose of preparing their minds to receive, in due time, the seeds of the Gospel. However they might have been puzzled and confounded by the latter circumstances of our Saviour's life, it can hardly be thought possible that the persons who had found themselves instantly relieved by his divine word, from painful and dangerous complaints, or from such disabilities as want of sight, hearing, or speech, should fail to recollect those mercies, when they heard his Gospel preached, his resurrection asserted, his ascent into heaven testified; and saw new miracles daily performed by his disciples, through the efficacy of his mighty name. Of such persons, it is highly probable, was principally formed that primitive Church in Jerusalem, over which St. James presided as Bishop: persons who remembered with compunction the benefits they had received from the Saviour's goodness, and accused themselves with bitterness, and

 certainly

certainly with justice, for having ever doubted of his power.

Of the very numerous miracles, performed by our blessed Lord, there is but one that carries with it the smallest semblance of severity; and the subject of that was an inanimate being, a tree[1]. When the barren fig-tree withered at his word, there was given at once an implied lesson against unproductive uselessness; and probably an intimation, necessary to his disciples at the moment, of the power to perform acts of severity, which he could exert, were he so disposed. The life of a barren fig-tree could not surely stand in competition with such objects *.

[1] Matt. xxi. 18, &c. Mark xi. 12, &c.

* Some futile difficulties have been raised about its being said to be not yet the time of figs. His command might easily have anticipated the time, had he not chosen rather to give a lesson to his Apostles, than to work a miracle for *his own* relief, which was a step very contrary to his practice.

It

It is not perfectly clear whether there was any exertion of miraculous power in the two instances, when he drove the traders out of the Temple. The one, which took place at his first passover, is recorded by St. John alone[1]; the other, after the third passover, is related by the three other Evangelists. It seems probable that the persons collected in the Temple, must, in both instances, have been at least miraculously overawed. We cannot otherwise suppose, that so many persons, as seem to have been there collected, would have given way to the authority of a single man, unarmed, or suffered him to overturn their tables and their seats, and to drive them out *. Whether these acts were miraculous or not, there was more of severity in them, and in the words by

[1] John ii. 13, &c.

* St. John says that he made a scourge of small cords, to drive them out; ii. 15. but this was not in itself a weapon of any terror.

which

which they were accompanied, than in general belonged to the character of Jesus. But it was in vindication of the honour of God's house, that he so exerted himself: and it reminded his disciples, even in the first instance, of the prophetic text, "the "zeal of thine house hath eaten me up [1]."

But what is most to the purpose of the present discussion is to appeal to the feelings of every reader, whether this mode of exerting his authority was such as would have been invented by any writer, endeavouring to describe such a personage as Jesus Christ. Most certainly not. Every human imagination would have armed him with more terror, and much more severity. Something in the way of punishment would have been inflicted on the offending traders, worse than the overthrow of their tables, or a few casual strokes from a lash of small cords. This would have been

[1] John ii. 17.

consistent

consistent with the ideas of men; but the narrative of the Evangelists is consistent only with that real character of Jesus, which no human imagination could ever have conceived [1].

The permission given to the devils, to enter into the herd of swine, operated collaterally as a punishment to the possessors of those forbidden animals: but it showed yet more strongly his irresistible power over spiritual beings; even to the extent of making their requests completely defeat their own purposes. The devils must certainly have hoped to remain in the swine; and they were driven out again immediately, by the sudden destruction of those animals *.

A few,

[1] Matt. viii. Mark v. Luke viii.

* We have here one of those few instances in which the Evangelists do not completely agree in the circumstances of their narrative. St. Matthew mentions

A few, and indeed a very few, of our Lord's miracles seem principally intended to give a just idea of his power. Of this kind we may, in part, esteem his first miracle at Cana in Galilee [1], the conversion of the water into wine. It showed, indeed, at the same time, that he was not unwilling to promote the indulgence of an innocent hilarity; and that he approved of rejoicing at a marriage, as proceeding from a reasonable cause of joy. It showed at once that he was averse to all that morose severity, which human pretenders to superior sanctity have generally assumed,

mentions two persons possessed, St. Mark and St. Luke only one. The existence of two, however, includes the one; and one might be rather more remarkable than the other. So also in his tenth chap. v. 30, St. Matthew speaks of two blind men, where St. Mark (chap. x.) and St. Luke (chap. xviii.) mentions only one. These are differences indeed, but cannot be esteemed contradictions.

[1] John ii. 1.

sumed,

sumed, and which probably every inventor of such a character would have attributed to him. It displays him to us, in the very opening of his career, with that kind and sociable mildness, which never ceased to distinguish him. It showed moreover, in a striking manner, the power which he possessed over the elements of nature; a power well worthy of him by whom those elements had their various offices assigned, and hardly conceivable to belong to any other.

The miraculous draught of fishes [1], which preceded the calling of Peter and others, was principally a display of power; but calculated particularly to impress the minds of those whom the Saviour was about to call to his service: though it might be allegorized, and was indeed applied by himself, to the winning of converts to the Gospel.

[1] Luke v. 6.

When

When our Lord walked on the sea[1], and afterwards caused the ship to arrive at once at the place of its destination, his principal object seems to have been to instruct his Apostles[2], and to try their faith. When he stilled the tempest by his word[3], there was yet a greater object included, the preservation of their lives from danger. Their remark upon it was such as must naturally arise in the minds of men so preserved. "What manner of "man is this? for he commandeth even "the winds and the sea, and they obey "him!"—What manner of man indeed! Certainly not such a one as some modern teachers would make of him; nor such as any inventor of specious fables would ever have ventured to feign. This august act of divine power, so calmly exercised, and with such unaffected dignity, sunk doubtless very deep into the minds of all who

[1] Matt. xiv. 25. Mark vi. 48. John vi. 19.
[2] John vi. 21. [3] Matt. viii. Mark iv. Luke viii.

beheld

beheld it. Three of the Evangelists have therefore described it, as nearly in the same words as could be done without copying; and yet with such minuter differences as would arise from the independent recollections of different minds. But how have they described it? Without an exclamation, or any mark of wonder, except so far as is expressed in the recorded words of the beholders. This is characteristic at once of simplicity and truth.

What was the full intention of the sublime scene of the Transfiguration, to which only some select Apostles were admitted, we do not perhaps yet know: though two writers of celebrity*, have shown the probability of its being intended to give an insight into the glorified state of human bodies, when the trials of this world shall be past. That it was in-

* Dr. Holmes, late Dean of Winchester, Collator of the Septuagint, in a Sermon preached at Oxford, in 1777, and the late Bp. Porteus.

tended

tended for the instruction of the three Apostles is beyond a doubt. But the Divine Voice from heaven, " this is my be- " loved Son in whom I am well pleased, " hear ye him [1]," while it impressed the Apostles with the perfect knowledge of their Master's heavenly origin, might be designed also as an encouragement to the man Christ Jesus, whose great scene of difficulty was now approaching. It might be a mark of divine approbation for what had passed already of his human ministry, and an earnest of complete success in that which was to follow.

There is hardly any thing more sublime, in all the great sublime of Scripture, than the whole of this extraordinary scene. The marvellous change of our Saviour's form, the shining of his raiment, the appearance of two glorified persons with him, who, by some secret intimation, were known to be Moses and Elias; the over-

[1] Matt. xvii. Mark ix. Luke ix.

shadowing

shadowing cloud; the voice from heaven; what a collection of amazing circumstances! No wonder that Peter was confounded, and knew not what he said. It must have been a bold, as well as a fertile imagination, which could have feigned these things: and what did the writers know, but from this very fact, of glorified bodies; or of the state in which the just are to subsist after death? It might even be urged that writers of a fictitious Gospel, would hardly have introduced into this scene Moses, whose revelation they hoped to supersede. But it is superfluous. Enough for us that we have three competent, distinct, and most holy witnesses for this great transaction *. Let us add, as well we may, such witnesses, for veracity and uprightness of character, as never were united in giving testimony to any facts upon earth, except those which relate to Jesus Christ.

* We have had, in fact, four; for it should not be forgotten that St. Peter also witnesses the same. See below, p. 255, *note*.

Out

Out of the astonishing number of our Saviour's miracles, these few are all that are not simply and primarily benevolent: and even with these also benevolence is, in fact, more or less united. Of the first we have already seen, that, though it belongs not to so high an order of beneficence, as that which alleviates or removes the sufferings of men, it is founded altogether on condescending kindness, and indulgence for their innocent gratifications. The others, in the mildest manner, either correct offences, or give important instructions. The prodigious mass of miraculous interferences, excepted from this short list, consists altogether of diseases healed, devils cast out, dead persons restored; things no less worthy of a heavenly Saviour to perform, than impossible for a human agent to imitate. Impossible, I will add, for any writer to feign, who published his account while the events were fresh in memory. For of these wonderful works, very few were per-

performed in secret; they were done in general before multitudes, with a word or a touch, from which the effect was immediate, visible, and complete. Had they not then been really performed, it would have been matter of public notoriety, when the Gospels were first published, that no such things were recollected by any one; and all persons, then living in Judea or Galilee, would have been able to contradict the assertions. Bold, indeed, must have been the writers who should have ventured to tell whole nations of people, that they saw, what in fact they did not see, and received miraculous benefits, of which they had no knowledge or recollection, nor any traces remaining among them.

How numerous these miracles of mercy really were, can only be estimated, as already suggested, by looking to the instances in which the Evangelists tell us that

that he healed *multitudes*. Thus in Galilee they tell us, that, after healing Peter's wife's mother, in the evening, " *all they* " *that had any sick* with divers diseases, " brought them unto him; and *he laid* " *his hands on every one of them*, and " healed them[1]." So says St. Luke; and so also, in substance, but in their own words, say St. Matthew and St. Mark[2]. The former of these tells us, more explicitly than the other, that Jesus continued to do the same throughout Galilee; and that even from all parts of Syria, they brought persons who were sick, lunatic, or possessed, and received the same miraculous benefits. In consequence of this, it is added, " there followed him great " multitudes of people, from Galilee, and " from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, " and from Judea, and from beyond Jor- " dan[3]." All these then were prepared,

[1] Luke iv. 40. [2] Matt. iv. 16. Mark i. 32.
[3] Matt. iv. 25.

not

not to contradict, but to confirm the reports of the Evangelists, when given to the world.

In another instance, when he withdrew from the persecution of the Pharisees and others, who were mad to destroy him, for healing a leper on the Sabbath-day, both St. Matthew and St. Mark tell us that *great multitudes* followed him and " *he* " *healed them all*[1];" that is all who required healing; which is even more than equivalent to St. Mark's expression, that " he *had healed many*[2]." The latter also adds, " insomuch that they pressed " upon him for to touch him, as many as " had plagues;"—which touch, we are told in other places, was always efficacious.—St. Luke particularly says, on another occasion, " and the whole multitude sought " to touch him: for there went virtue out

[1] Matt. xii. 15. [2] Mark iii. 10.

" of

" of him, and *healed them all*[1];" and as this instance appears to be different, in various circumstances, from that above noticed in St. Mark, we may add it to the account of his extensive acts of healing.

When the two disciples of John came, as before mentioned, to enquire of Jesus, whether he were indeed " *He* that should " come," St. Luke says that, " in that " same hour he cured *many* of their in- " firmities and plagues, and of evil spirits, " and unto many that were blind he gave " sight[2];" and he himself thus reminded those disciples of what he had done before their eyes. " Go and show John again " those things which ye do hear and see. " The blind receive their sight, and the " lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and " the deaf hear[3], the dead are raised

[1] Luke vi. 19. [2] Luke vii. 21. [3] Matt. xi. 4.

" up*, and the poor have the Gospel " preached to them[1]."

At another time, when a great multitude followed him into the desert of Bethsaida, " because they saw his miracles, " which he did on them that were dis- " eased[2]," we are told by three Evangelists that he received them, and began to teach them many things, and spake to them of the kingdom of God, and *healed their sick*[3]. Soon after that, in the land of Gennesaret, the people sent out into all the country round about, and *collected the sick from all parts*, and brought them even in beds; " and " whithersoever he entered into villages,

* Though only three instances are circumstantially recorded of our Lord's raising the dead, that of the widow's son at Nain, the daughter of Jairus, and Lazarus, this passage seems to show, that even that great miracle was performed by him on more occasions.

[1] Luke vii. 22, &c. [2] John vi. 2.
[3] Matt. xiv. 34. Mark vi. 13. Luke ix. 11.

" or city, or country, they laid the sick in " the streets, and besought him that they " might touch, if it were but the border " of his garment[1], and *as many as touched* " *him* were made whole[2]." Again, when he was near the sea of Galilee, and had retired to a mountain, " *great multitudes* " came unto him, having with them those " that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, " and many others, and cast them down " at Jesus' feet, and *he healed them*[3]." Lastly, we find this benevolent teacher healing the blind, and lame, who came to him in the Temple at Jerusalem[4].

These are all the collective instances of healing, which I have been able to observe in the Gospels; but, as each of these includes multitudes, the amount of the whole must be prodigious. When we add to this, that St. John, the last of the Evan-

[1] Mark vi. 56. [2] Matt. xiv. 35. [3] Matt. xv. 30. [4] Matt. xxi. 14.

gelists,

gelists, assures us that many more things were done by him than were written by himself[1], or any other person; or than could possibly be contained in any moderate number of books[2], we cannot doubt that our Lord left behind him a vast aggregate of persons, who were able at least to bear witness to his mighty works, whatever conclusion they might choose to draw from them.

Let us not, however, quit the astonishing subject of his miracles, without remarking upon one, of which all the four Evangelists have recorded the occasion, but St. Luke only the particulars. When the servants and emissaries of the high priest approached to seize him, Peter, ever too prompt to act upon the impulses of his own mind, drew a sword, and making a blow at a servant of the high priest, whose name was Malchus, cut off

[1] John xx. 30. [2] John xxi. 25.

 his

his right ear. Our Lord, rebuking this superfluous exertion of human power on his behalf, said immediately, " Put up " again thy sword into his place—think- " est thou that I cannot now pray to my " Father and he shall presently give me " more than twelve legions of angels? " But how then shall the Scriptures be " fulfilled [1]?" To the wounded person he calmly said, " suffer ye thus far," and repaired the injury by a touch [2]. This was the conduct of an innocent man, who felt at the same time the indignity of being encompassed with swords and staves like a thief,—yet he repressed the opposition of his friends, and at once healed the wound of his enemy. Whoever can point out any code of law, morality, or opinion, then existing in the world, and accessible to the Evangelists, by which this mild and gentle dignity of character was recommended, might go far towards showing

[1] Matt. xxvi. 52, &c. [2] Luke xxii. 50.

that

that such a narrative might possibly be feigned. But thinking, as I do, that it was totally repugnant to the passions and prejudices of all men upon earth, I cannot but feel that it is a fact which carries the stamp of its own truth upon it. It never would have entered into the mind of man to conceive an action so sublime, if it had not actually been done, by him whose object was to show what man might become, under such a set of precepts and examples as he would give; but which never till that time existed in the world, nor had entered into the contemplation of any moralist.

Among so vast a number of miracles imputed, had any been invented, would not some of them at least have borne the stamp of human passions, or betrayed the feebleness of human judgment? Would there not have been, to put it even at the best, some few that were trifling, or some that were vindictive? Look only into any account of spurious miracles, and the an-

swer will meet you at once. Miracles untainted with human passions, were never even invented in any other instance. Miracles of unmixed benevolence and mercy never were imagined upon earth, but in the case of Jesus. Instead of conceiving such a character before-hand, men could not even copy it, when it had been faithfully and beautifully drawn.

CHAPTER XI.

PARABLES OF OUR LORD.

HAVING considered our Lord's actions, we come next to the contemplation of his words; which, for distinction's sake, I have thought proper to arrange under four heads: 1. That of his parables; 2. His discourses, or instructions in general; 3. His prophecies; 4. His representations of himself; which will be considered in this and three subsequent Chapters.

Though neither all the acts of our Lord, as St. John expressly tells us, nor undoubtedly all his words, were ever recorded, yet it is astonishing how few of

either have been handed down to us, through any authentic channel, except in the narrations of the four Evangelists. From which it is natural to conclude, that Christians were, in general, so fully satisfied with the sanctity and sufficiency of those records, as not to seek beyond them.

St. Paul indeed has preserved, as well known in his time, a short but holy sentence of our Lord's, which is not in the Gospels; where he exhorts the Ephesian elders to "remember the words of the "Lord Jesus, how he said, *It is more* "*blessed to give than to receive*[1]." This, being in the form of a maxim, and therefore easily remembered, was probably caught up at the time, and never forgotten, by the faithful.

A few words are also preserved by Clement, Origen, and Eusebius, which have

[1] Acts xx. 35.

been conjectured to follow Matt. vi. 33. "Seek things that are great, and the "small shall be added to you; seek hea- "venly things, and those that are earthly "shall be added to you*." They agree, at least in sense, with that verse, and might have been said at that time, or on some similar occasion, but they are not extant in any MS. of the Gospels.

A very remarkable part of our Saviour's divine discourses is that in which he delivers his parables. They are numerous and striking, and the introduction of them stamps a peculiar character on his instructions. Of many of these parables, a careful consideration not only authorizes, but compels us to say, that they could not have been invented by the persons, who have preserved them. They include too wide a range of thought, for such writers to attain; they are often conversant in

* Griesbach in loco.

things of which they had no knowledge; they are often prophetical, and allude to things which they could not possibly foresee.

Nor let us forget, though it is only an inferior part of the argument, that the very nature of an apologue, or parable, implies a skill and talent in composition, which by no means falls to the lot of ordinary writers; and least of all to such as have had no exercise or instruction in literature. To select fit circumstances, to unite, conduct, and express them with propriety, to point them ultimately, with force, to the object intended to be illustrated, all these things require a talent and adroitness in the writer, of which we have no reason to believe that any of the Evangelists could be possessed *. To St. Luke they might perhaps

* "This way of teaching [in parables] hath a "great advantage over any other, by reason it "hath much more power in exciting the fancy and "affections.

perhaps with most probability be attributed, but he has not so many parables as St. Matthew. These historians were plain and simple men. The writers of apologues have generally been, and of necessity must be, men of skill and ingenuity in writing. We have no reason to believe that any one of the Evangelists, could have invented or conducted any consistent parables.

The reason assigned by our Lord, for speaking in parables, does not at first sight appear to consist with his usual be-

"affections. Plain arguments, and moral precepts, "barely proposed, are more flat in their operation, "not so lively and persuasive, as when they steal "into a man's assent, under the covert of a pa- "rable. To be expert in this particular, *is not* "*in every man's power;* like poetry, it requires "such a natural faculty as cannot be taught. But "so far as it falls under the rules and directions of "art, it belongs to the precepts of oratory."— *Bishop Wilkins's Secret and Swift Messenger*, Chap. ii. p. 20.

nevolence.

nevolence. He did so, he said, that they "who were without," that is, who were not disciples, might hear, and not understand, "lest at any time they should be "converted, and their sins should be for-"given them[1]."—Observe, however, that this slight fence of difficulty was opposed only to those who were careless and unworthy hearers. These were the only persons against whom the prophecy of Esaias was pointed, that "hearing they "should hear and not understand, and "seeing they should see and not per-"ceive[2];" and in them only it was fulfilled. To all his disciples, that is, not only to the Apostles, but to all that were honestly inclined to follow him, and seriously desirous to understand his words, our Lord was always ready to give the true explanation, and unfold the hidden meaning of his parables. The most remarkable instance of this occurs in the

[1] Matt. iv. 12. [2] Matt. viii. 14.

parable

parable of the sower, which three of the Evangelists have related[1], all subjoining the explanation, as given at the request of the disciples.

It was not in fact, very often necessary to give such explanations; for the parables were generally either themselves illustrations of some important truth, or of so easy application, that even the unwilling could hardly fail to comprehend them. Thus, of the parable of the wicked husbandmen, we are told, that the chief priests and pharisees perceived that he had spoken this parable against them, and were accordingly exasperated[2]. Some of the parables indeed are no more than mere comparisons, or illustrations, formed in allusion to objects in themselves common and familiar. I shall notice only such as are in any respect remarkable.

[1] Matt. xiii. Mark iv. Luke viii.
[2] Luke xx. 19, &c.

When

When Jesus compared those who should "hear his sayings and do them[1]," to a wise man who built his house upon a rock, and marked at the same time the miserable destruction of those who should be hearers only and not doers, he showed a confidence in the importance of his doctrines, which well became his character; and on this occasion it is that St. Matthew makes the remark, that the people were particularly astonished at his doctrine, because "he taught them *as one having authority*, and not as the scribes[2]." The scribes, or doctors of the law, were mere expounders of that which was written in the Old Testament, or commentators upon it. They therefore, like other commentators, probably hesitated, and doubted, and disputed. But here was one who cut off all dispute, and pronounced with decision what was right. It

[1] Matt. vii. 24. Luke vi. 47.
[2] Ibid. vii. 28, 29.

was

was perfectly proper that he should do so, considering who he was; but how was this authoritative manner consistent with his general humility and modesty of demeanour? Or how could the writers of his acts, had they been the inventors also, have presumed to attribute to him qualities so opposite, or have been led even to think of doing it? The truth,—the truth only, was their suggestion, and their warrant.

Jesus taught with authority, because his doctrines were the Word of God[1]. He behaved with gentleness and humility, because he assumed to himself no authority, while his kingdom was not yet established, and himself not yet glorified. When asked to interfere respecting an inheritance, his reply was, "Man, who "made me a judge or a divider over you[2]? But when he delivered the precepts of his exalted morality or divine instruction, it

[1] John viii. 28. [2] Luke xii. 14.

was,

was, " Ye have heard that this or that was " said of old," that is, by Moses or other inspired persons under the law, " but *I* " *say unto you*"—Do this or that. " Ye " have heard that it was said by them of " old time, thou shalt not kill—but *I say* " *unto you,* that whosoever is *angry* with " his brother, without a cause, shall be " in danger[1]."—" It hath been said*, " whosoever shall put away his wife, let " him give her a bill of divorcement; but " *I say unto you* that whosoever shall put " away his wife, saving for the cause of " fornication, causeth her to commit " adultery[2]." " It hath been said by " them of old time, thou shalt not for- " swear thyself,—but *I say unto you,* " swear not at all[3]." Here we see the authority of a divinely commissioned teacher, speaking with becoming dignity, but without insolence, because so far he was already

[1] Matt. v. 21.

* Namely by Moses.

[2] Matt. v. 32. [3] Ibid. v. 33.

already authorized. To teach was his commission, as man,—to rule was not to be given to him till a later period.

What our Lord says concerning an unclean spirit, cast out and returning again, and making the state of the person possesed ten times worse than it was at first, according to the report of two Evangelists, may be considered as a parable[1]; in which he intended to represent the desperate state of the Jews at that time. St. Matthew indeed so applies it, for he concludes by saying, in the person of Jesus, " Even so shall it be also unto this wicked " generation." St. Luke omits this application, though in other respects his account is parallel. Our Lord had reproved the scribes and pharisees for requiring a sign; he had told them that no sign should be given, but that of Jonas the prophet, which was figurative of his own death and resur-

[1] Matt. xii. 43. Luke xi. 24.

resurrection; he had upbraided them with being harder of heart than either the men of Nineveh, or the queen of the South, though called upon by a person essentially superior both to Jonas and to Solomon; and he concluded by teaching, from this parable, that, whatever temporary amendment the people might derive from his instructions, they would collectively become, after all, much worse than ever; not only from the circumstance of having heard and then rejected him, but also by a gradual increase and accumulation of transgressions.

Here then were two things taught, which never could have occurred to any persons who should have presumed to invent parables for Christ. In the first place, there is the prophecy of the increasing depravity of the Jewish nation; which we now know from history to have arrived at its heighth at the period of the siege of Jerusalem by Titus; an event which the two writers

writers of these Gospels did not live to witness. In the second place, there is an implied knowledge of the actions of evil spirits, to which no man could reasonably pretend, but which was perfectly clear to him who knew all things. The Evangelists could not have thought of illustrating any declaration, by that which to them must have been more obscure than the thing declared. But our Saviour chose, in this instance, to make information of one kind the vehicle for conveying instruction of a different nature. This he did in several other instances. The state of separate spirits, the various transactions of the great day of Judgment, and such high topics, were introduced into some of his parables; though of such things no man could have knowledge or conception, but from his teaching.

The awful parable against covetousness, in which the rich man vainly promises himself a long enjoyment of his treasured stores,

stores[1], carries on it the stamp of divine authority. The dreadful words of God, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be "required of thee"—are not such as any mortal would presume to invent. He to whom the secret counsels of God were open and familiar, could pronounce them boldly; and the warning voice resounds through ages, to those who trust too far in worldly wealth, or worldly hopes.

The parable in the same chapter, concerning the coming of the Lord, or of the Son of Man, "at an hour when ye think "not[2]" alludes in part to the final visitation of Jerusalem; which was yet to come, at the period when St. Luke wrote. The parable of the barren fig-tree at once illustrates the long-suffering of God[3], and intimates the coming of vengeance, if repentance should be longer delayed. "Let "it alone this year also, till I shall dig

[1] Luke xii. 16. [2] Ibid. xii. 36. [3] Ibid. xiii. 6.

"about

"about it and dung it."—Our Lord was the labouring gardener, who was then employed in digging and manuring round the barren fig-tree of Judea;—but it bore not its proper fruit, and the sequel of the parable followed: "after that thou shalt cut "it down." But whether Jerusalem would be cut down or not, St. Luke could not yet know, except from the information of his Lord.

The parable of the sower is related by three Evangelists[1], who all give also our Lord's explanation of it. Here then I would ask, as in many other places,—How could these three writers, composing their narratives in three remote countries*, so nearly agree in the very words of their accounts? It is easy, but it seems to me very idle, to say that they might copy from each other. In the first place, it should

[1] Matt. xiii. Mark iv. 3. Luke viii. 5.

* See above, pp. 14, &c.

be

be proved that it was possible for them to copy from each other, or from any common source, situated as they were when they wrote. But, in the next, I insist (and we might put the proof upon this parable, as properly as on any other part of the Gospels, though it is evident in almost all the parallelisms that occur) that these passages afford the most evident proof that the writers of them did *not* copy, either from each other, or from any written document whatsoever. I proceed to illustrate this position; which to me is as plain as any assertion that can be made, on the subject of literary composition.

The copying of one book from another is usually the resource either of ignorance or indolence. Of ignorance, when the writer has no knowledge of the facts, except what he derives from the author whom he copies: of indolence, when, though previously informed, he takes the statement of another, which he approves, to

to save himself the thought and trouble, which would be required for forming an original narrative. With respect then to the Evangelists, above all other writers, we may surely ask, if they knew not of a certainty what they undertook to write, why did they undertake it? But if they knew from their own recollection or enquiries, why should they copy from any other person? If they thought a new narrative was wanted, why should they copy one which was already to be had? If they are supposed to have copied through ignorance, why did they presume to alter even a single word? If they copied through indolence, the very same indolence would doubtless have led them to copy word for word, which is much more easy than to copy with variations, but which it never can be pretended they have done, for many lines together.

I know but of one more supposition, which can be made, and that is so dis-

honourable to the Evangelists, that I think no sincere Christian could be induced to make it. It is this. That they copied indeed, through ignorance or indolence, or both, but inserted slight alterations, as they went on, for the purpose of disguising or concealing their thefts. Should an enemy even presume to say this, for surely no other would say it, to him I would boldly reply; that if so, they were very awkward and blundering contrivers: for they altered so very little, that copying has been generally imputed to them: and yet sometimes so indiscreetly, that their differences have been, without reason indeed, but hastily, regarded as contradictions.

These suppositions being dismissed, what then remains, but to observe the real fact, and to give these sacred writers all the credit they so amply deserve. They relate their narratives like men who had seen the same things done, or heard the same discourses delivered, and had studiously

ously endeavoured to preserve them with exactness, aware of their great importance to every future age of the world. They had themselves seen and heard the transactions and discourses, in the case of St. Matthew and St. John; or, in that of St. Mark and St. Luke, had collected the truth respecting them, from those who had been present; all parties concerned feeling the highest obligation to report both facts and words with precise exactness. But, as no two human minds ever proceed with an exact parallelism of ideas, or suggest an unvaried flow of the same words, so in reporting these things, with all their care, the Evangelists, like other men, made some minute variations. Substantially, their accounts are the same, and bespeak the same origin; namely, truth, reality, and correct representation. Inspiration was doubtless a further guarantee for this substantial agreement, though it went not to the length of suggesting words. In little matters therefore

they vary, so that one reports the same fact rather more fully, another more concisely; one preserves more of our Lord's words, another fewer; one subjoins a reason or an explanation, which another did not feel to be necessary: and thus, we may be assured, would three of the most correct observers, and scrupulously exact reporters in the world do always, if they separately related what they had seen or heard the very day before. Probably each would do so if he twice related, in conversation only, the very same transactions or discourses *.

Our daily experience may prove this to us. Narrations of the same facts, or of the same discourses always differ from

* This is well illustrated by St. Paul's two public narratives of his own conversion, which are now added in the Appendix, N°. VI, with the historical narrative of St. Luke to illustrate more fully this kind of difference and coincidence.

each

each other; generally indeed, more than they ought to differ; from carelessness, inaccuracy, or the love of embellishment. But, setting these causes aside, they still must differ. One person will relate rather more, another rather less of the facts or words; one will try to explain as he goes, another to illustrate; and the expressions used will always savour, more or less, of the habitual mode of discourse peculiar to the individual. But in reporting speeches, the more care is taken to preserve the very words of the speaker, the less there will be, in that part, of the usual difference of expressions. Still, something there will always remain, because however careful a man may be to describe or imitate another, he is never able to put off himself. This then is the correct view, and I hesitate not to say, the only correct view, of the resemblances and differences in the Gospels. They agree as narratives will agree, whose common model is the truth. They differ as distinct narratives will al-

ways differ, while men are men; but they neither agree nor differ as copied narratives would, for the reasons already assigned. Let us now consider the example before us, taking St. Matthew's narrative as the text, and observing the variations of the two other Evangelists.

CHAP.

Matthew xiii. 1.

The same day, went Jesus out of the house and sat

by the sea-side,

2. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him,

so that he went into a ship, and sat,

and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

3. And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying.

Behold a sower went forth to sow;

4. And when he sowed, some *seeds* fell by the way-side,

and the fowls came and devoured them up.

5. Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and

Mark iv. 1.

And he began again to teach by the sea-side:

and there was, a great multitude gathered unto him

so that he entered into a ship, and sat on the sea;

and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.

2. And he taught them many things

by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine. 3. Hearken, Behold there went out a sower to sow:

4. And it came to pass, as he sowed some

fell by the way-side.

And the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

5. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and

Luke viii. 4.

And when much people were gathered together and were come to him out of every city.

he spake

by a parable.

5. A sower went out to sow his seed;

and as he sowed some

fell by the way-side: and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

6. And some fell upon a rock:

Matthew.	*Mark.*	*Luke.*
forthwith they sprung up because they had no deepness of earth.	immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth.	
6. And when the sun was up, they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away.	6. But when the sun was up, it was scorched and because it had no root it withered away.	and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.
7. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up and choked them.	7. And some fell among thorns and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.	7. And some fell among thorns and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it.
8. But other fell into good ground and brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold.	8. And other fell on good ground and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased, and brought forth some thirty and some sixty, and some an hundred.	8. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up and bare fruit. an hundred fold.
9. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.	9. And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.	And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

I have taken this example without particular choice, as one of the first which occurred, of three parallel narratives: but I put it boldly to the consideration of any intelligent reader, whether there is here any symptom of copying. There is a strong resemblance in the words, because the writers were all studious to tell the same matter with correctness. The accounts which most resemble each other are those of St. Matthew and St. Mark. But the few variations, even between these, are not such as copyists are likely to have made, but merely such minute differences of expression, as would naturally arise in the endeavour to use the same words, *without comparing them together:* that is, trifling variations, leaving the substance quite the same *. St. Luke's narrative is here

* For what important, or even sensible reason, should one Evangelist speak of the seeds in the singular, another in the plural number, if one copied from the other? Matt. v. 4. The fowls came

here by far the most concise, and his omissions are such as he could have no inducement to make, had he seen, when he wrote, either of the other accounts. He speaks also of this parable alone, not of Christ teaching the multitude in parables. The request of the disciples to have the parable explained, and the explanation itself, are also given by the three, and with similar resemblances, and differences. But the passage already shown may suffice for a specimen. To any good *Harmony* of the Gospels I refer my readers for

and devoured *them* up. Mark v. 4. The fowls *of the air* came and devoured *it* up: and so it is continued.

It is the same in the Greek. Καὶ φαγεν αὐτά and Καὶ φαγεν αὐτό, &c. Why should such a change be made by a copyist?

In other respects, there is certainly much more verbal agreement between St. Matthew and St. Mark, in this place, in the original than in the English; and more indeed than is usual. St. Luke, however, omits very much which both the others have. Why so? if he followed and copied them? Did he secretly condemn the fullness of their accounts? It can hardly be imagined.

for abundant examples of the same kind; not doubting that every unprejudiced examiner will agree with me, that there is nothing like copying in the resemblances of the Evangelists; and every thing in their differences to prove that they were neither made by design, nor do in the least diminish the consistency of the several accounts.

I have given this specimen in the English translation, for the sake of English readers *; and abundantly satisfactory it surely

* But let not any one suppose that the original passages will not stand the same test. They are in fact only still more convincing in the Greek Gospels. For instance *St. Matthew* says ὄχλοι πολλοὶ. St. Mark says ὄχλος πολὺς.—One says εἰς τὸ πλοῖον ἐμβάντα, the other ἐμβάντα εἰς τὸ πλοῖον. St. Mark throws in ἐν τῇ θαλάσσῃ, just as it appears in the English Version: but one Evangelist says that all the multitude ἐπὶ τὸν αἰγιαλὸν εἰστήκει, the other πρὸς τὴν θάλασσαν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἦν. St. Matthew says, ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς πολλὰ ἐν παραβολαῖς, the other, ἐδίδασκεν αὐτοὺς ἐν

surely is, for removing every idea of copying. For why should copyists have made such slight and useless alterations as appear in these three texts? Had the differences been more important, we might have supposed some reasons for them; and should perhaps have imagined some reasons to exist, whether we could have discovered them or not. But here are variations, for making which a reasonable motive can neither be discovered nor suspected. If St. Matthew wrote first, and St. Mark followed him, why, in his first verse, should he have put in " on the sea,"

παραβολαῖς πολλὰ. All these phrases being respectively equivalent in sense, why should the expressions have been changed? No one will pretend that, on either hand, they are so much more elegant than the words used by the other writer, as to have been changed for that reason. Nor were the Evangelists pickers of words, or cullers of phrases. The whole passage is inserted in the Greek at the end of the volume, Appendix, N°. V. that any competent enquirer may satisfy himself how completely every part confirms these observations.

which

which is equally implied in saying that he " sat in the ship."—When St. Matthew had said that " the whole multitude stood " on the shore;" why should his successor have changed it to, " was by the sea, on " the land?"—These questions equally apply, if the order of writing be supposed the reverse; for the spirit of the enquiry is, why should either writer, supposing him to copy from the other, alter the words, without making the least change in the sense? Is it not much easier to copy what is placed before you, than to make these little variations? But we may go farther, and ask, why, if one had already told the story, so nearly as the other would have told it, and the latter knew of it,—why, I say, should the latter have written it at all? It would have been better evidently to have told some other part of the discourses of Jesus, than to repeat the same so nearly in the same words. No new evidence is gained by one man copying from another. The whole is resolv-

able

able into the testimony of the first. The rest, however numerous, prove nothing but that they believed the first writer to be right, and thought him worthy to be followed. Whoever will look carefully through the whole specimen, will see that similar observations will apply to every part. They are also equally valid, in a different mode of application, against the supposition of copying from any common document.

But we have not yet quite done with this parable of the sower. It remains to be observed, that it is in some degree prophetical. It describes the various effects to be produced on different hearers, by the preaching of the Gospel. The heat of the sun, which scorches up the seed sown upon stony ground, alludes, according to our Saviour's own interpretation, to times of tribulation, temptation, affliction, and persecution. But of these the Evangelists could not yet know much, when

when they drew up their several narratives. Not enough surely to know how fatal these trials would prove to multitudes, whose stony hearts gave ready admission indeed to the word, but afforded no place for it to take root, and obtain a vigorous growth. This then may be reckoned among the things that they could not have invented, at the time when they wrote, had invention been their object instead of accurate narrative.

Of the next parable, which St. Matthew only has preserved, that of the tares[1], I shall say no more, than that it is also prophetical; and that its view extends even to the day of judgment*. How far St.

[1] Matt. xiii. 24—30.

* Observe too that a distinct and copious explanation of it is given, as from our Lord himself:—in verse 37—43. The words are very solemn. "The Son of Man shall send forth his angels," &c. "Then shall the righteous shine forth," &c. But this belongs to a topic on which I shall more fully treat hereafter.

Mat-

Matthew, as a mere man, could be competent to take such a view, I leave the reader to decide. Much the same may be said of that parable, preserved by St. Mark alone[1], of seed sown, and growing to its maturity in a way not to be perceived; with a reference to the distant harvest. The parable of the mustard seed foretells the wonderful increase of the Gospel, from beginnings so very unpromising[2]: an idea which appearances could neither authorize nor suggest, at the time when these Evangelists wrote. Of the same kind are several other parables, occurring in that part of the Gospels: and it is remarkable that though St. Mark does not give the explanation of them, as St. Matthew has done, yet he bears complete testimony to their having been all explained by their divine Author: "and when they were "alone, he expounded all things to his "disciples[3]."—In the parable of the net

[1] Mark iv. 26. [2] Matt. xiii. 31. Mark iv. 30. [3] Mark iv. 34.

thrown

thrown into the sea, the interpretation is united with the parable. "The kingdom "of heaven is like unto a net that was cast "into the sea, and gathered of every "kind: which, when it was full, they "drew to shore, and sat down, and ga-"thered the good into vessels, but cast "the bad away. *So shall it be at the* "*end* of the world: the angels shall come "forth, and sever the wicked from among "the just, and shall cast them into the "furnace of fire: there shall be wailing "and gnashing of teeth[1]."—Our Saviour knew most assuredly, not only that there will be a day of judgment, but also how it will be conducted, as appears from many of his discourses. But his disciples could not know it, except from him; and would they have presumed to feign it? They were not surely, men of such a character; nor, in truth, of such abilities.

To pass over other parables which have

[1] Matt. xiii. 47—50.

less

less application to my present train of reasoning, let us attend a while to that of the good Samaritan[1]. When we consider that the great object of this parable is to recommend an universal benevolence; to point out, in the strongest manner, the duty of succouring a fellow-creature in distress, in defiance of the most obstinate national prejudices, or even antipathies, we cannot conceive it to be the production of any man bred up in Judaism; unless we allow that the man had by some means learned to rise superior to all prejudices. Antipathies between different bodies of men, though unhappily too common in the world, have seldom been so strong as they were between the Jews and Samaritans. The very suspicion that they might be going to Jerusalem was considered as sufficient reason, in a village of the Samaritans, for refusing to Jesus and two of his disciples, though unknown travellers, ad-

[1] Luke x. 30—37.

mittance into their houses[1]. There were, in the severest sense of the word, *no dealings between them*[2]: not even the common intercourse of humanity, no not so slight as giving of a drop of water[3]. Yet here a Samaritan is made, by our Saviour, the hero of the parable, and preferred, by comparison, to a priest and a Levite of the Jews, for his readiness and kindness in giving succour to a Jew. The only native of Judea, therefore, from whom this parable could originate, was he to whom St. Luke attributes it, our Lord Jesus Christ.

That inimitable originality of thought and views, which appears also in the preceding, and some other parables of our Lord, is no where more strikingly exemplified, than in the beautiful apologue of the prodigal son[4]. Whether it contains a more touching and correct picture of hu-

[1] Luke ix. 53. [2] John iv. 9. [3] Ibid.
[4] Luke xv. 11—32.

man nature, or a more profound and consoling view of divine mercy, it is impossible to decide. The perverseness and profligacy of the son, his well deserved misery, and his bitter repentance, show us ourselves in a view affectingly exact; while the tenderness of the father to the sincere penitent, his ready embrace, his hearty welcome, so figure to us that divine mercy, which is never weary of forgiving, that no man surely could have presumed to invent it. He, to whom alone the counsels of the Father were known, he who descended from the bosom of the Father, he could give it, because he knew it: and from his mouth, beyond all doubt, the Evangelists derived it. The parable may be considered also as prophetic of the reception of the Gentiles, the estranged and profligate sons of God.

I approach with awe to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, in which the heavenly teacher gives some insight into the

the state of the invisible world[1]: not indeed a distinct view, or a particular revelation of facts, but enough to afford us full assurance of the melancholy doom of some mortals, and the blessedness of others. These are things, of which no human being had yet presumed to open a view. But without dwelling upon the improbability of such a scene being attempted by the Evangelist, without authority, let us only fix our minds upon the great religious truth, with which the parable concludes. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, "neither will they be persuaded, though "one rose from the dead." This is indeed teaching as one that had authority, and not as the Scribes. It is an oracle; pronounced with firmness, and containing pure and perfect truth. It conveys at once a complete justification of the preparatory system of divine Revelation, which was sufficient to keep men from

[1] Luke xvi. 19—31.

evil,

evil, if they would attend to it; and displays a perfect and unerring view of the human heart, always pretending to want superior aid, and yet neglecting what is actually bestowed. If the man ever lived who could have pronounced all this, with such distinctness, except Jesus Christ, I renounce all knowledge of the powers of man. He only could have said it, who, in announcing a new covenant declared, "I "came not to destroy the Law and the "Prophets, but to fulfil them[1]." Who, besides him could see so deeply, at that time, into the great plan of the Gospel? Certainly none of his disciples.

Of the parable of the *Pharisee*[2] and *Publican**, I shall only observe, that if it bear not the stamp of the characteristic style and manner of the speaker, nothing

[1] Matt. v. 17. [2] Luke xviii. 9.

* Observe that this parable of the publican, is not told by *Matthew* the publican, who might seem to have most interest in it. The Evangelists commend not themselves, they leave that to others.

ever

ever did. I do not assert that no other person could have framed it, but I firmly think that no one had ever lived, at that period, who would have said, "I tell you "this man went down to his house jus-"tified rather than the other: for every "one that exalteth himself shall be "abased; and he that humbleth himself "shall be exalted." If Christ had not said this, no one would ever have said it for him.

But we come now to a parable of a very different character, to one so entirely prophetical, that unless our Lord explained it, as he did so many parables, his Apostles themselves could not have understood it. This is the parable of the *labourers in the vineyard*[1], related only by St. Matthew*. We distinctly learn from it, that though

[1] Matt. xx. 1—16.

* Upon the system of *copying*, which has not, in my opinion, a foot to stand on, it would seem utterly

though the Lord had called the Jews first into his vineyard, and in very early times, yet the same reward shall await those who were now called by Christ in person, and even those who should be called in the latest periods of the Gospel. Consequently, that their jealous plea, of being the original people of God, would avail them nothing against the Gentiles, who should be equal partakers of the divine benevolence. When this was written by St. Matthew, it is most probable that the intention of Christ to call in the Gentiles was entirely unknown to his Apostles. We know with what difficulty St. Peter and St. Paul first took up the idea [1].

But yet more important is the parable,

terly incredible, that the three other Evangelists should have neglected to insert this parable: which developes the whole system of God respecting the two covenants. A most important instruction!

[1] Acts x. 9, &c.

so admirably blending history and prophecy, of the iniquitous and cruel husbandmen, who refusing to produce the lawful profit of the vineyard, misused the successive messengers of their Lord [1]; and finally rejected his own Son *, slaying him, and casting him out of the vineyard. So pointed was this allusion, in some of its parts, that the rulers of the Jews could not but peceive that it was spoken against them [2]. So important was it deemed by the Evangelists, that three of them have related it at large †. Yet, so far as it spoke of the murder of the Lord's Son, it was prophetical, when first delivered. The fulfilment of this part, the Evangelists had indeed seen when they wrote their narra-

[1] Matt. xxi. 33. Mark xii. 1. Luke xx. 9.

* Where observe that he does not fail to notice that he had only *one* Son, his *well-beloved*, Mark xii. 6.

[2] Matt. xxi. 45, and parallel.

† Here also the comparison of the three narratives may be conveniently made, as above.

tives. But the last awful sentence of the prophecy, " He will miserably destroy " those wicked men, and will let out his " vineyard unto other husbandmen, which " shall render him the fruits in their sea- " sons[1]," was as yet unfulfilled, when these three Gospels were published: nor could any human foresight have suggested that it was then so near to its accomplishment. So familiar, in the use of all the prophets, was the comparison of the Jewish people to a vineyard *, that no hearer, acquainted with the ancient Scriptures, could mistake the application. St. Luke however alone has mentioned, of the Jewish priests and others, that, " when they heard it,

[1] Matt. xxi. 41.

* See those two sublime instances of it, in the lxxxixth Psalm v. 8—16. and in Isaiah v. 1—7. Without copying the ancient prophets, Christ clearly shows, that the same Divine Spirit animated his expressions; or, rather, that what he then delivered by their agency, he now confirmed and extended in person.

" they

" they said, God forbid[1]!" So struck were they with the force of the application. But the three Evangelists unite in saying, that the priests perceived it to be spoken against them. They saw that it pointed at their iniquity, and intimated their merited punishment[2]. But to pronounce, first that they would slay the Son of their Lord, and then be miserably destroyed for that offence, was not, at that time, within the reach of any thing but prophetic inspiration, or still higher knowledge *.

[1] Luke xx. 16.

[2] Matt. xxi. 45. Mark xii. 12. Luke xx. 19.

* It is somewhat remarkable, that soon after this, the Sadducees put a parable to Jesus, concerning the woman who married seven brethren. This may show that parables were then used among the Jews, but not that they were composed by the common people. The Sadducees were subtle disputants, a kind of infidels. Our Lord's answer to them proved his vast superiority in knowledge; and at the same time exposed the shallow ignorance, so common in captious objectors.

With this, I shall conclude my observations on the parables, wishing only to leave it impressed upon the minds of my readers, that they are all distinguished by a style of allegorical contrivance, invention, and various knowledge, by no means within the reach of such men as Matthew, and his brother Evangelists; and that many of them denote a knowledge which, at the time of writing, they could not possibly possess, except by inspiration; which if we grant to them, in that degree, nothing else will be liable to dispute.

CHAPTER XII.

DISCOURSES OF OUR LORD.

Besides the parables of Christ, there are also many of his other discourses related in the Gospels, which lead us to very similar conclusions. They well deserve a separate consideration. If these divine discourses at all resembled any that ever were delivered by man, there might be some pretence for considering them as the invention of men; but since they have a style and character entirely peculiar to themselves, suited to the mysterious nature of Christ, and to no other, I cannot but regard it as infallibly certain, that they were actually delivered by him, and are faithfully reported by his Evangelists.

These discourses, very various in length, amount to no less than fifty; after excluding all those which consist of parables, and those which are direct prophecies. I must therefore, as in the case of the parables, confine my observations to a few of the most remarkable. Let us begin, with that which first occurs, his discourse with the woman of Samaria, at Jacob's well. In this we see at once the characteristic style of our Lord's discourses. Taking occasion from the water of the well, of which they were speaking, he begins a figurative allusion to the gifts of the Holy Spirit [1], which he was to bestow on those who should believe. This, however, was no new figure, invented by himself, but the accustomed language of the ancient prophets. Isaiah, in particular, exclaims [2], "Ho, every one that thirsteth "come ye to the waters *." The same figure was resumed by Jesus himself at the

[1] John iv. 10. [2] Isa. lv. 1.

* See also Isa. xliv. 3. xii. 3, &c.

feast

feast of Tabernacles, when he afterwards attended it. For St. John tells us that, "in "the last day, that great day of the feast *, "Jesus stood, and cried, If any man thirst, "let him come to me and drink. He that "believeth on me, as the Scripture hath "said [1], out of his belly shall flow rivers "of living water [2]:" and here the Evangelist explicitly interprets the allusion, adding, "but this he spake of the Spirit, "which they that believe on him should "receive [3]." Exactly in this style then, Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall "thirst again: But whosoever shall drink "of the water that I shall give him, shall "never thirst: but the water that I shall "give him shall be in him a well of wa-"ter, springing up into everlasting life [4]."

* On which the bringing in of water was an accustomed, though not an enjoined, ceremony.

[1] Is. lviii. 7. [2] John vii. 37. [3] Ibid. 39. [4] Ibid. 13, 14.

St. John alone records both these accounts; evidently because, as in other instances, he was desirous to supply the omissions of the former Evangelists, in matters which he justly considered as important. In the remainder of the discourse, there are many things which could only have come from the authoritative teaching of Jesus. "God is a Spirit, and "they that worship him must worship "him in spirit and in truth [1]." Could St. John have presumed to say what God is?—he who also recorded the true declaration of Christ, that "no man knoweth the "Father but the Son?" Certainly not. It must have been the declaration of the Son himself. With equal authority does Jesus inform the woman, first, that "Sal-"vation is of the Jews [2];" and yet that the hour was coming, when Jerusalem itself should no longer be the appropriated place for the worship of the Father [3].

[1] John iv. 24. [2] Ibid. 22. [3] Ibid. iv. 21.

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This intimation, belongs indeed to the prophetic declarations of the Lord, of which I mean separately to treat. But here it cannot be altogether omitted. The worship at Jerusalem was not yet abolished, when St. John wrote this account. How could he then, except by inspiration, know that it would so soon happen?—But men inspired are not exactly those whom we should suspect of writing fictitious narratives. Inspired or not, however, he could not fail to be right, if he faithfully recorded the words of his divine Master: and this, I contend, he certainly did, in the present, and all other instances.

I pass on to the sermon on the mount, the most remarkable, in some respects, of all our Lord's discourses. This admirable collection of divine precepts, always original, often sublime, what Christian does not know and revere? If we say that no man ever lived, who could have framed or invented this discourse, we shall speak

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not only what must be felt by every considerate reader, but what may almost admit of positive proof. Most assuredly, no precepts or system of morality existed, in the time of the Apostles, from which these doctrines could have been extracted, or by which they could have been suggested. That which would have approached the nearest to them might have been found in the ancient Scriptures. But even thence they could not have been drawn by any conscientious Jews, since, though they agree in fundamental points, there are many instances in which the ancient law is either improved or superseded by them. Thus, in the following passages. "Ye have heard that it was said by them "of old time, *thou shalt not commit adul-* "*tery*—but I say unto you[1]," &c. "It "hath been said whosoever shall put "away his wife shall give her a bill "of divorcement, but I say unto you[2],"

[1] Matt. v. 27. [2] Ibid. 31.

&c.

&c. "It hath been said, *thou shalt not* "*forswear thyself*, but I say unto you, "swear not at all[1]." "It hath been said "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a "tooth; but *I say* unto you, that ye re- "sist not evil[2]." It hath been said, thou "shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine "enemy, but I say unto you *love your* "*enemies*[3]." In all these cases, already referred to for another purpose, there is clearly an addition or improvement made, by authority, to the commands of the first covenant.

Whatever the Evangelists might have learned of the sublime morality of the ancient Scriptures, these things they could not have learned, for they are not there; and the greater was their veneration for those inspired books, the less would they have ventured thus to deviate from them. It was impossible that they should; since to improve upon them was

[1] Matt. v. 33. [2] Ibid. 38. [3] Ibid. 43.

 beyond

beyond the powers of man; and to contradict them no pious person could have dared, who had not the authority of God, to deliver a more perfect law. If God permitted some things to the Jews, on account of the hardness of their hearts, who could presume that he would ever cease to permit them? Who could foresee that he would at length abrogate his own indulgence, in contemplation of a purer system? It required the authority, as well as the wisdom of the divine Jesus, to do this; nor could it have entered into the mind of any inferior person, born in Judea, and educated under the law of Moses. These parts of the sermon, therefore, speak decisively their own origin.

But to be more particular. This divine discourse is noticed by two only of the Evangelists, St. Matthew and St. Luke [1]. The reports of these are very different

[1] Matt. v. 6, 7. Luke vi. 20—49.

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in extent. That of St. Matthew occupies three entire chapters; it gives the sermon in full detail, and probably contains the whole, or nearly the whole, of what our Lord delivered. St. Luke only touches upon some principal heads, but in the same order; and so as to give, most evidently, fragments of the same discourse. It seems as if one historian had been an actual hearer of the whole, which, from the manner and circumstances, of its delivery, had sunk so deep into his mind, that every word of it was retained; while the other had only caught up separate parts, as reported to him by one or more of the persons present, but had no means of preserving or obtaining the connection of the whole. Now this is precisely what would arise, in the most natural manner, from the circumstances of these two Evangelists. St. *Matthew* being a constant attendant and follower of Jesus, from the time of his being called as an Apostle, which was only a very short time before the delivery

very of this sermon; *St. Luke*, only a disciple, and though generally a companion of the Apostles after his conversion, probably not so early attached, as to have been present on this occasion. St. Matthew, recently called, would naturally listen with the more eager attention to the first extended discourse of his Master. St. Luke, who collected it long after the time, would obtain only broken parts, deprived of some of their energy, and much of their original connection.

Here also a new proof meets us that nothing like copying was practised by the Evangelists. For if St. Matthew wrote first, as is commonly supposed, it is not conceivable that St Luke would have followed, with so much less perfect an account of this memorable sermon. Or if St. Luke wrote first, such an account as he could collect from good information, and St. Matthew afterwards completed the report, would not St. Mark also, on the copying

copying hypothesis, have given us something at least, of that which was so well deserving of everlasting remembrance. Nothing so completely reconciles all ideas on the subject, as the fact, which is confirmed in so many different ways, that the Evangelists wrote separately and independently; no one having yet seen what had been produced by another, when he composed his own Gospel; except in the case of St. John, who confessedly wrote after all the rest.

It belongs not to a plan like the present, to expatiate on the particulars of this divine discourse; it would detain us much too long, and would perhaps divert our attention from our principal object, the veracity of the Evangelists. A few remarks, directed chiefly to that point, will be most conducive to our purpose.

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St. Matthew gives us the scenery of this transaction. Our Saviour seated on a moun-

a mountain, and his disciples gathered round, to receive his sacred instructions. He begins with those beatitudes, which have been an inexhaustible source of sermons to the ministers of his Church; a source which never can be exhausted, while Christian principles require to be illustrated and enforced. These, which are much more fully given by St. Matthew than St. Luke, contain, among many holy instructions, some that are peculiarly fitted to our present purpose. They express thoughts, which never till then had entered into the mind of man; thoughts as just as they are original; and which convey, in fact, the very essence of the truths, which Christ was first commissioned to reveal. Such are the blessings pronounced on meekness, humility, and poverty of spirit; the necessity for purity, the joy of affliction, the triumph of persecution! Who shall persuade a man of reason and reflection, that Matthew and Luke could or would have invented these things; or would

would have opened their system of precepts, by denouncing worldly adversity, to that cause which they were most desirous to support?

Of the authoritative additions to the ancient law, which this sermon introduces, I have already spoken. They are chiefly recorded by St. Matthew: but St. Luke unites in reporting that most remarkable among them; "But I say unto you which "hear, love your enemies, do good to them "that hate you, bless them that curse you, "and pray for them which despitefully use "you[1]." This is not the voice of human nature, but of much higher wisdom, and superior purity. No man had ever lived, who would have invented this precept. The strongest passions of the heart oppose it, the most inveterate prejudices of all nations and all climates disavow and contradict it. Commanded as it is by

[1] Luke vi. 28, also Matt. v. 44.

a divine

a divine teacher, it is hardly possible even now to obtain any thing like obedience to it. Passion resists, and artifice evades it; and they who most profess to follow it, cannot always so subdue themselves, as to practice what they promise. We may regard it as an absolute certainty, therefore, that the invention of man would never have produced this precept; and less perhaps than any other, the invention of a Jew, by whom hatred of some enemies was supposed to be a principle of duty. The very foundation for it was wanting, in all minds but that of Jesus; till the doctrine of our being all brethren, sons of one Almighty Father, had been fully revealed and explained.

On this part of the subject, both Evangelists expatiate, exhibiting it in various lights, and adducing for it various reasons; as recollection brought back, or information supplied, the words of their divine teacher. St. Luke concludes this class of precepts

precepts by saying, "Be ye therefore "merciful, as your Father also is merci-"ful[1]." St. Matthew gives it, "Be ye "therefore perfect, even as your Father "which is in Heaven is perfect[2];" viewing perfection, in that instance, only so far as it related to love, gentleness, and benevolence.

The commands that follow, against ostentation in giving alms, in praying, and in fasting, are preserved by St. Matthew alone[3]. They extend to the whole of his sixth chapter, which includes also that invaluable model of general supplication, the Lord's prayer*; and many

[1] Luke vi. 36. [2] Matt. v. 48. [3] Matt. vi. 1—34.

* St. Luke gives this prayer, in a different part of his history, (*Ch.* xi. 2.) nor can we think it extraordinary, that our Lord should more than once deliver an instruction of such value and importance. Hence also some slight differences in the expressions, which perhaps might be made by Christ himself.

holy

holy instructions to rely on God, instead of perplexing our minds too much with worldly cares. To believe that any part of these precepts could be the invention of man, and of a man who (according to the infidel's notion) must have been an impostor, requires a stretch of credulity, which nothing but the fatal determination to believe any thing rather than the truth could possibly produce. Of the Lord's prayer, in particular, we may safely say, that, as no man ever did compose a supplication to God, so brief, so comprehensive, so holy, —it cannot be unreasonable to believe, that no one ever could have done it; without the aid of that wisdom and that spirit, which dwelt completely in Christ Jesus, and in none before or after him.

The precepts on justice and judgment are given by both these Evangelists[1]. I shall not however at present make them

[1] Matt. vii. 1. Luke vi. 37.

the

the subject of remark; except to recall to observation, that the great and fundamental principle of all justice, between man and man, is here more clearly expressed, than in any other system of morality in the world. "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them[1]."—"For this," adds St. Matthew, "is the law and the prophets." It is, in fact, the perfect abstract, and vital essence of all their morality, and indeed of all morality. But by what powers these Evangelists looked so deeply into their meaning will never be explained, unless we refer their knowledge to the actual teaching of their Lord.

The precepts which follow are mixed, in St. Matthew's account, with intimations concerning future judgment, which

[1] Matt. vii. 12. Luke vi. 31.

never

never could have entered the mind of any inferior teacher. "Strait is the gate and "narrow is the way, which leadeth unto "life, and few there be that find it[1]." "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, "Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of "heaven; but he that doeth the will of "my Father which is in Heaven[2]."— Again, "Many will say to me, *in that* "*day*, Lord, Lord, have we not prophe- "sied in thy name, and in thy name "have cast out devils, and in thy name "done many wonderful works? and then "will I profess unto them, I never knew "ye, depart from me, ye that work ini- "quity[3]." Who can wonder that, after our Lord had uttered such things, "the "people were astonished at his doc- "trines[4];" because "he taught them as "one having authority, and not as the "scribes."

[1] Matt. vii. 14.
[2] Ibid. v. 21.
[3] Ibid. v. 22, 23.
[4] Ibid. vii. 28.

It was indeed with a divine authority, which no one but himself could have assumed; and which no one, who had not seen or heard him, could have imagined or supposed.

In this sermon alone, therefore, we have seen abundant ground to demonstrate the veracity of the historians. In it, they have delivered many things, far beyond the reach of their own means or capacities to know, imagine, or invent. That, therefore, which they could not have produced from themselves, but which they have reported so well, they may surely have full credit for reporting truly.

I have dwelt so long upon this most important discourse, that the fear of being prolix almost deters me from entering upon others: and, after what has been said,

[1] Matt. v. 29.

said, perhaps a few more general remarks may suffice. In every discourse attributed to our Lord, by any one of the Evangelists, we find the same uniform character of dignity, authority, profound knowledge, and deep insight into the most secret counsels of God: with a frequent reference to the Father, in apostrophe or prayer, conceived in such terms, as would neither have become any other teacher, nor were ever attributed to any. They are the words of the incarnate Son of God, and would suit no other speaker.

Thus, in our Lord's 5th discourse*, the denunciations of woe for incredulity, and the declaration of what would happen at the last day, have all the stamp of his authority. "Woe unto thee Chorazin! "woe unto thee Bethsaida[1]!"—"it shall

* An enumeration of our Lord's discourses, as here referred to, is given in the Appendix to this work.

[1] Matt. xi. 20.

"be

"be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon "at the day of Judgment, than for "you*."—In his sixth discourse[1], who but Christ himself could have declared, with such decision, what sins should or should not be forgiven? We tremble while we read, on his authority, that there exists an offence which precludes all hope of pardon; but we derive comfort from the thought that, probably, it was also peculiar to that time and place†, and not, at this time, capable of repetition. But the knowledge which this declaration implied belonged to Christ alone: and this we may surely say, from our knowledge of

* These words are reported also by St. Luke, as repeated when he sent out the seventy disciples. *Luke* x. 13.

[1] Matt. xii. 31. Mark iii. 28. See also Luke xii. 10.

† Namely, the imputing of his mighty works to the power of the devil. For St. Mark adds to his account, "Because they said, he hath an unclean "Spirit."

human nature, that if any of his followers had been authorized to pronounce, what sin was the least capable of forgiveness, they would have fixed on an offence against their Lord, rather than against the Holy Ghost.

Of those numerous discourses, which have been preserved by St. John alone, we may say in general, that they are often conceived in a sublime strain of allegory, which no human teacher has ever equalled. "Labour not for the meat which perish-"eth, but for that meat which endureth "unto everlasting life, which the Son of "man shall give unto you[1]." "I am "the bread of life; he that cometh to me "shall never hunger, and he that believeth "on me shall never thirst[2]." But however peculiar these things may be, they are the genuine peculiarities of Christ, and of no other person. His discourses, by

[1] Disc. 13, John vi. 27. [2] Ibid. 35.

whom-

whomsoever recorded, arise out of present circumstances, and are allusive to familiar or present objects*. So that St. John, though he reports the latter discourses alone, reports them with full assent of the other Evangelists, as to their style and character[1]. Whoever reads these sublime discourses with attention, will see in them, if I mistake not, every imaginable mark of perfect authenticity[2]. A manner so peculiar, a knowledge so profound, and a conscious dignity, breaking forth through every circumstance of outward humiliation, with such force, that no human being, who had not known the facts, could ever have conceived them in

* Thus St. Matthew and St. Mark record his allusions to *the leaven* of the Pharisees, &c. Matt. xvi. 6. Mark viii. 15. with many other instances. See Jortin's Sixth Discourse on the Christian Religion. §. 5.

[1] See John vii. 16—38. Ibid. viii. 12—58. Ibid. ix. 39. Ibid. x. 20, 22—38.

[2] Disc. 5 and 32.

his mind: these are documents, not to be forged by any art or cunning.

Our Saviour's lessons of humility, illustrated by the gentle docility of children, are twice introduced by the three first Evangelists[1]. Now, if we reflect that humility was never taught as a virtue, till Christ displayed at once both the precept, and the most illustrious example; and that humility is by no means an ordinary characteristic of those who undertake to enlighten others, we shall regard it as an infallible certainty, that these instructions were not, in any degree, the invention of Matthew, Mark, or Luke, but the genuine oracles of their divine Instructor, by them most faithfully reported. They agree, not only in representing that their master gave these lessons once, but that he repeated them, with strong similarity

[1] Viz. Matt. xviii. 2. Ibid. xix. 13. Mark ix. 36. Ibid. x. 13. Luke ix. 47. Ibid. xviii. 15.

of

of circumstances. Considering the slowness of his hearers, to apprehend his doctrines, so new to their understandings, and so little in harmony with their feelings, it is probable that he used such repetitions in many other instances. Hence has arisen a slight difficulty in settling some of the parallelisms of the Gospels, from the mistaken idea that the same words could only have been spoken on the same occasion. But, in the present instance, the coincidence of three Evangelists in giving both accounts, if, (as we have seen reason to believe) they wrote at different times and places, is such a proof of exact veracity in all, that it cannot possibly be misinterpreted.

Further to pursue these proofs, at present, seems unnecessary. Many other discourses of our Lord remain *, in which the attentive reader, if he be reasonable

* See Appendix, N°. III.

 and

and candid also, will discern similar proofs of authenticity; will see the marks of a wisdom more than human, and of a character never conceived or invented by man. To dwell upon them now, to a greater extent, would be, perhaps, to fall into something approaching to repetition; and it seems better to leave the reader some instances to remark for himself, than, by attempting to exhaust so copious a subject, to incur the danger of fatiguing the attention. I proceed, therefore, to speak of the prophetic declarations of our Lord; or that class of his discourses which contains direct predictions.

CHAPTER XIII.

PROPHECIES OF OUR LORD.

As the chief object of this book is to prove that the Evangelists could not possibly have feigned the histories which they have left, I shall dwell, almost exclusively, in the present chapter; upon those prophecies of Christ which were not fulfilled, till after the Gospels had been published.

Christ indeed, frequently and minutely predicted his own death, with its peculiar circumstances, and also his resurrection; nor did the Apostles, at the time,

even comprehend his words *, filled as they were with different hopes, and blinded by opposite and inveterate prejudices. But all these things had not only been explained, but actually fulfilled, when the Evangelists wrote; and therefore these predictions belong not to our present topic. I cannot however omit one remark, which seems to convey more than might, on a slight view, be perceived.

Our Saviour, speaking of the duties and difficulties of his immediate disciples, often uses the expression of "taking up "the cross;" and he does this, long before that peculiar mode of death could even have been thought of for him by his enemies. The rulers of the Jews had it not in their power to put any man to death, without the authority of the Roman Governor [1]. Now crucifixion was

* "They understood none of those things." Luke xviii. 34.

[1] John xviii. 31.

the

the Roman punishment usually inflicted on slaves, and the lowest class of criminals. Two things then were here to be anticipated; first, that the Romans would consent to put such a man to death at all; and secondly, that they would allow it to be done in this most ignominious manner. But how a man so innocent should be made liable to such a punishment, was not an easy matter, even for malice to anticipate or contrive. Unless, therefore, it can be proved, which I conceive it cannot, that *to take up the cross* was already a known and current phrase, for to embark in troubles, miseries, and dangers, there is a prophetical intimation implied in this very expression, which the Evangelists themselves do not appear to have remarked. "Whosoever doth not *bear his cross*, "and come after me, cannot be my "disciple [1]," is therefore equivalent to, "whosoever will not voluntarily encoun-

[1] Luke xv. 27. also Matt. xvi. 24.

" ter the death, which, though you know it
" not, is prepared for me,—is unworthy of
" me[1]." In preserving this phrase therefore, of their Blessed Master, these historians have given incidentally an implied proof of his prescience, which they do not seem to have intended; in addition to his more direct prophecies.

The predictions of our Saviour are nearly forty in number. But of these, from the restrictions now stated, only a small part will require our present notice. They all prove him, indeed, to have been a prophet, which we know he was, and in truth, very much more than a prophet; but they do not all apply to our present argument. To this topic those predictions only belong, which refer to matters not fulfilled when the Evangelists wrote, such as the destruction of Jerusalem; and events, subsequent to that,

[1] Mark viii. 34. Luke ix. 23.

which have since happened, or are still to come.

The first intimation of this kind appears in St. Luke's Gospel, where our Lord is represented as breaking out into this tender and pathetic exclamation. " O
" Jerusalem *, Jerusalem, which killest
" the prophets, and stonest them that are
" sent unto thee; how often would I have
" gathered thy children together, as a hen
" doth gather her brood under her wings,
" and ye would not. *Behold your house*
" *is left unto you desolate*[1]!" Such was the first rather obscure denunciation of the approaching fall of Jerusalem. But it appears to me, that this declaration of our Lord cannot be rightly understood, unless we consider him as referring also, to what he had done of old, as the God of Israel.

* The same words are also recorded, as spoken on another occasion, in St. Matthew's Gospel, Ch. xxiii. 37.

[1] Luke xiii. 34.

For Christ had not done, as man, what he there declares he had. He had preached to them, and performed in their sight many marvellous works; he had condemned their iniquities, and exhorted them to better practices; but he had not attempted to collect them, as a body, under his own immediate protection. He had even refused to assume or accept of any authority or power over them; without which he could not possibly have gathered the people under his protection. This then must have been done when he so frequently sent prophets or messengers unto them, whom they killed or stoned. To those times his words allude, and of them they must be understood. This was the subject of his lamentation; that, like the wicked husbandmen in his own parable, they had successively ill-treated all those who had been sent to reform them, and bring them under the government of his holy laws; and that they would now, as he perfectly well knew, destroy the Son also.

also. For this was the desolation of their house denounced. But, of the near approach of that desolation, the Evangelists, when they wrote, knew nothing. It impended indeed, but the signs were not yet visible. It was prepared in the counsels of omnipotence, but it was not yet revealed to man. It was known only to the Son, to whom the Father communicates all knowledge. It follows clearly, that these historians could not have invented for him words, of which they knew not the precise intention, when they wrote them.

The same event is much more fully predicted, in another chapter of the same Evangelist [1]; in which the suddenness and extremity of the coming destruction are distinctly pointed out. But the words have still a degree of prophetic obscurity,

[1] Luke xvii. 20—37.

which,

which, till the event had given the explanation, must have been as unintelligible to St. Luke, as to any other person. What "eagles" would be gathered together, and on what "body[1]" they were to prey, could not be known, till the Romans approached to invest Jerusalem; with which, when that Gospel was written, they were not even at war. The terms of the following denunciation, however, could not be misunderstood; though the time when the calamity was to happen was not yet revealed. When the Saviour, in his love for Jerusalem, wept over it, and exclaimed; "If thou hadst known[2], "even thou, at least in this thy day*, "the things which belong unto thy "peace! but now they are hidden from "thine eyes. For the days shall come

[1] Luke v. 37. [2] Ibid. xix. 41.

* That is, not only in thy former visitations, as above alluded to, but even now, at my coming.

"upon

"upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast "a trench about thee, and compass thee "round, and keep thee in on every side: "and shall lay thee even with the ground, "and thy children within thee; and they "shall not leave in thee one stone upon "another; because thou knewest not "the time of thy visitation." Little could St. Luke imagine, unless by the spirit of prophecy, that the time was now so near, when these most awful words should be fulfilled. Our Lord had once indeed intimated the nearness of it, by saying that some then living should see it[1]: but in terms so obscure that none of those, who recorded them, appear as yet to have understood their meaning.

The destruction of the temple, our Saviour distinctly foretold, when his disciples pointed out to him the magnitude and beauty of that building. This is re-

[1] Matt. xvi. 28. Mark ix. 1. Luke ix. 27.

lated,

lated, with such parallelisms and differences as we have before remarked, by three of the Evangelists [1]: and they all represent him as proceeding from thence to foretell the persecutions, the afflictions, and all the calamities which were to follow *. St. Matthew and St. Mark agree in recording the remarkable expressions, "that "*the abomination of desolation*, spoken "of by the prophet Daniel," should then stand "in the holy place," or "where it "ought not [2]." Here we perceive also something like a limit of time; for the Evangelists agree in saying, that "the "Gospel must first be published among "all nations," and then "this end should

[1] Matt. xxiv. 1. Mark xiii. 1. Luke xxi. 5.

* The exact and minute fulfillment of our Saviour's prophecies, respecting the destruction of Jerusalem has been fully treated of by Lardner, in a work reprinted in Bp. Watson's Theological Tracts, vol. 5. by Bp. Porteus in his Lectures on St. Matthew, and other writers.

[2] Matt. xxiv. 15. Mark xiii. 14.

"come."

"come." But this was a limit, which, on their own authority, these writers could not have ventured to fix. For, when they wrote, the Gospel had been preached throughout a great part of the world, and yet, *apparently*, the end was not coming. It approached indeed most nearly, but it came, as our Saviour said, "like a thief "in the night," without the knowledge or observation of men. Still there is no kind of ambiguity in the words which all the Evangelists ascribe to him. St. Luke, in particular, has these remarkable expressions. "And they shall fall by the "edge of the sword, and *shall be led* "*away captive into all nations: and* "*Jerusalem shall be trodden down of* "*the Gentiles, until the times of the* "*Gentiles shall be fulfilled* [1]." That so it happened, we now know; and that Jerusalem *is* trodden down of the Gentiles, we still see, *because their time is not yet fulfilled*. But how could the Evangelists

[1] Luke xxi. 24.

know

know that these things would be so? or how venture to invent such predictions for their Master, if he had not really pronounced them? It is quite incredible that they should attempt it.

Another distinct prediction of the same events was given by Jesus, as he was led to execution; when he said to the women who lamented, "Daughters of Jerusalem, "weep not for me, but weep for your- "selves, and for your children. For be- "hold, the days are coming in the which "they shall say, Blessed are the barren, "and the wombs that never bare, and the "paps that never gave suck[1]."

But of all the predictions, which the Evangelists must have been completely unable to invent, the most remarkable is that solemn denunciation of the great day of final judgment, which our Saviour delivered a

[1] Luke xxiii. 28.

short

short time before his departure. The images are such as never, till then, entered into the mind of man; the words of such appropriate and awful solemnity, as could not have been suggested, but by a mind filled with the foresight of the reality. It is the Judge of mankind himself, describing the last great office which he was appointed to perform. Read, sinner, and tremble! "When the Son of Man "shall come in his glory, and all his holy "angels with him, then shall he sit upon "the throne of his glory: and before "him shall be gathered all nations; and "he shall separate them one from another, "as a Shepherd divideth his sheep from "the goats[1]."

Are these the words of Levi the publican, or even of Matthew the Evangelist? Impossible! They are the words of Christ himself, the very King who is to

[1] Matt. xxv. 31.

preside

preside at that tribunal: and when he goes into the more exact detail of those so distant transactions; when he pronounces the two awful sentences, to the good, and to the wicked;—to the first, the delightful invitation, "Come, ye blessed "of my Father, inherit the kingdom "prepared for you from the foundation "of the world;"—to the latter, the dreadful words, "Depart from me, ye cursed, "into everlasting fire, prepared for the "devil and his angels;"—when he assigns the leading reasons for these opposite judgments,—such as the exercise of Christian benevolence, on the one hand, —and the want of it on the other;—who shall presume to say that any other man, than the Son of God incarnate, could have seen so deeply into things of this high nature? or that any human imagination could have soared to such inventions?

I purposely abstain from seeking any other example, of discourses not to be invented

invented by man. This is all in all; and the mind that cannot draw conviction from it must be paralyzed, in the very noblest of its faculties, the power of discerning truth.

Other examples, however, there are, which a person reading the Gospels, with this view, will easily perceive, of predictions looking beyond the times when these sacred histories were written; but these I leave to the investigation of pious readers, who may be inclined to pursue the subject.

CHAPTER XIV.

OUR LORD'S REPRESENTATIONS OF HIMSELF

HAVING proved, as I hope satisfactorily, that the four Evangelists, gave separate and independent narratives of our Lord's actions and discourses; and that they could not have feigned them, even if they had wished to do so, since they possessed neither the knowledge nor the comprehension necessary for the purpose, at the time when they wrote; we may consider it as certain, that they have given us the genuine words of Christ; and consequently, so far as he chose to deliver it, his genuine character, as exhibited by himself.

Of one virtue, not till then esteemed a virtue, it must be allowed that he furnished the

the most illustrious example. This virtue is HUMILITY. Born in an inferior situation of life, he never sought to raise himself above it. In his ministry, as well as in his infancy, he was known as "the "carpenter's Son:" and, though he taught "as one having authority," he had not always even a dwelling; never such a one as was calculated to impress any outward respect. "Foxes," said he, "have holes, and "the birds of the air have nests, but the Son "of Man hath not where to lay his head[1]." Even when he eat his last passover with his disciples, he had to command a chamber in a stranger's house, where they might assemble with convenience[2]. Riches he had not, though he might doubtless have commanded them by miracle; and the very instance which proves that he could do so, proves at the same time that he had left himself unprovided. A single piece

[1] Matt. xiii. 20. Luke ix. 58.
[2] Matt. xxvi. 18. Mark xiv. 13. Luke xxii. 10.

of

of money was sufficient to pay the tribute for him and Peter[1], yet a fish must bring it, before it could be produced *.

Though he took to himself the authority which belonged to him, as a teacher of truth and righteousness, yet beyond that, in his human character, he assumed nothing; and when he was desired to interfere in a question of property, his reply was, "Man, who made me a judge or a "divider over you[2]?" He refused even to be called *good*, as man[3], while his probation was yet incomplete. Of himself

[1] Matt. xvii. 27.

* Certain women are mentioned who "ministered "to him of their substance." *Luke* viii. 3. Towards the latter part of his ministry, there seems to have been some contribution of money from more opulent disciples, so as to make a purse or bag necessary; the charge of bearing which was given to Judas. See *John* xii. 6.

[2] Matt. xix. 17. Mark x. 18. Luke xviii. 19.
[3] Luke xii. 14.

self he said, and doubtless with the strictest truth, "Learn of me, for I am meek "and lowly in heart[1];" and so little liable was he to anger, that when the Pharisees presumed "to urge him vehe-"mently, and to provoke him to speak of "many things[2]," they could catch nothing from his mouth, out of which they could frame any sort of accusation against him. As the prophet Isaiah had described him, ages before, such in fact he was. "He shall not strive nor cry," said the prophet, "neither shall any man "hear his voice in the streets," that is, as a voice of contention. "A bruised reed "shall he not break, and smoking flax "shall he not quench, till he send forth "judgment unto victory[3]."

Such was our blessed Lord, in his true and genuine character. If then at any

[1] Matt. xi. 29. [2] Luke xi. 53.
[3] Matt. xii. 19. Isa. xlii. 2.

 time

time he assumed a loftier style, and spoke of his own super-human dignity, in terms of strong expression, we may be perfectly certain, that whatever he thus took to himself was strictly and properly his own. Above all, we may be most assured, that he would be scrupulously careful not to mislead his disciples in their ideas of God; nor induce them to pay any honour to himself, that was due to the Father alone. With these ideas in our minds, let us consider and compare what we find recorded in the Gospels, of his words and actions, relating to himself; and determine what opinion of his office and dignity results of necessity from this comparison.

His frequent, perhaps his most frequent, appellation of himself is, *the Son of Man;* in which there was this peculiar propriety, that it marked his fitness for the office he then bore, and for the ministry which he was then fulfilling. The Messiah was to be *the Son of Man;* that is, truly and

and properly a man, and specifically, the son or descendant of David. As *the Son of Man,* he was tried and tempted; he underwent humiliation, agony, and death. As the Son of Man, when fully tried, and consequently glorified, he was to be appointed the Judge of all mankind. "The "Father," said he, "hath given him "authority to execute judgment also, "*because he is the Son of Man*[1]." This title was given to him by the prophet Daniel, and is repeated in the Revelation given to St. John[2]. As the Son of Man *, and still under trial, he said most truly, "My Father is greater than I[3];" and contemplating his removal from the sufferings of earth to the glories of heaven,

[1] John v. 27. [2] Dan. vii. 13. Rev. i. 13. xiv. 14.

* Ezekiel is addressed perpetually by the style of "Son of Man," but he is never called "*the* Son "of Man." Son of man means there no more than Man, or Mortal!

[3] John xiv. 28.

it was natural for him to say to his disciples, "If ye loved me, ye would re-
"joice, because I said, I go unto the
"Father[1];" such departure being full of glory and felicity.

But this SON OF MAN, truly man during his abode upon earth, whose "meat and
"drink it was to do the will of him that
"sent him[2]," was also *the SON OF GOD*, and existed with him in glory, before the world began. He therefore asserted, without scruple, that he was greater than *Jonas*, and *Solomon*[3], greater than *the Temple*[4], which being most holy, could hardly be accounted, by any Jew, inferior to any man. He declared that he had a right to be called Master and Lord[5]; and that he should be called so at the day of

[1] John xiv. 28. [2] Ibid. iv. 34.
[3] Matt. xii. 41, 42. Luke xi. 31, 32.
[4] Matt. xii. 6. [5] John xiii. 13. Matt. xxiii. 8, 10.

Judgment;

Judgment[1];—that he had power to forgive sins[2]; and that he was Lord even of the Sabbath day[3]. He declared, in the most explicit manner, that he came down from heaven, and still retained his place and dignity there[4]. "No man," said he,
"hath ascended up to heaven, but he that
"came down from heaven, even the Son
"of Man, *which is in heaven.*" He asserted "that he came down from hea-
"ven, to give life unto the world[5]; that if he went up from earth into heaven it would only be "ascending *where he was*
"*before*[6]." To the incredulous Jews he marked his superiority, by saying,
"ye are from beneath, I am *from above;*
"ye are of this world, I am not of this

[1] Matt. vii. 21, 22.
[2] Matt. ix. 5. Mark ii. 10. Luke v. 24.
[3] Matt. xii. 8.
[4] John iii. 13. so even Clarke explains the words "*who is* in heaven."
[5] John vi. 33. [6] Ibid v. 62.

 "world."

" world[1]." When those people accused him of *making himself equal with God*, by calling God his Father[2], so far was he from retracting that assertion, or feeling alarmed at the imputation, that he declared it immediately to be the will of God, " that all men should honour the " Son, *even as they honour the Father*[3];" with many other intimations of similar force. Hence also these remarkable expressions, " as the Father knoweth me, " so know I the Father[4]." " I have " power to lay down my life, and power " to take it up[5]; " I and my Father are " one[6];" " the Father is in me, and I in " him[7]." " He that seeth me seeth him

[1] John viii. 23. [2] John v. 18.
[3] Ibid. v. 23. also 20, 21, 22.
[4] John x. 15. [5] Ibid. 18.
[6] Ibid. 30. For this assertion the Jews again took up stones to stone him, saying that he " made " himself God." 33.
[7] Ibid. 38.

" that

" that sent me[1];" " ye believe in God, be- " lieve also in me[2];" " if ye had known me, " ye should have known the Father also[3]," —" he that hath seen me hath seen the " Father[4]." Hence likewise he took to himself the style and expression of Jehovah in the Old Testament, I AM; " verily " I say unto you, before Abraham was, " I AM[5]," " I proceeded forth, and came " from God," said he, " neither came I " of myself, but he sent me[6]." Equivalent to these are many other expressions, to which I can at present only refer[7].

Now let us ask ourselves, concerning these expressions, and others of a like nature, not, what gloss may be put upon

[1] John xii. 45. [2] Ibid. xiv. 1.
[3] Ibid. 7. [4] Ibid. 9.
[5] John viii. 58, for this also the Jews wanted to stone him.
[6] John viii. 42.
[7] Mark ix. 37. Luke ix. 48. Ibid. x. 16. John vii. 29. Ibid. xiii.

 them,

them, by a disputatious, subtle man, having a point to gain, or a theory to support; but what effect and meaning must they of necessity convey to plain and simple hearers, deeply convinced of the veracity and holiness of the speaker, and overpowered, as it were, by the splendour of his mighty works? Had a common man advanced such pretensions, they would have been ridiculous, as well as odious: but from the meek and humble Jesus, to whose character pride and ostentation were unknown; to whom nevertheless all the powers of nature were in manifest subjection; whom storms obeyed, diseases fled, the dead heard, and even devils confessed with fear; from him, such declarations, so frequently made to his disciples, could not but obtain implicit belief, even in their most strong and literal sense. Can it be thought possible, that he should trifle with his hearers, or run the smallest risk of misleading them, in matters of such vast importance?—Or that any possible

sible inducement could lead him to assume the incommunicable attributes of Deity, if he had not the most just pretensions to them.

If he said not these things, the Evangelists are no true historians. If he said them, and is not to be believed, according to the fair and natural meaning of his words, how are we to believe him at all? Every other word that he spoke may also have some meaning different from that which it seems to bear; and, if so, the perplexity of the Heathen oracles is nothing, compared to the obscurity of the Gospels. If he was enigmatical when he spoke of his own person, origin, and dignity, why should he be less so in his precepts and parables? Did he not know the danger of misleading unsuspecting persons into idolatry, or creature-worship? or knowing the danger, would he wilfully incur it? Is there any horrid blasphemy against him which may not be authorized

 by

by such suppositions?—and if we could deny him the character of *the Son of God* incarnate, how could we maintain for him that of a prudent, or even of an honest man? For if the words above cited, do not intend what they seem to signify, they have assuredly a strong and fatal tendency to deceive. They have actually deceived the vast majority of Christians from that time to this.

As man, Jesus Christ was constantly and anxiously pious towards God. We read of at least fifteen instances of his praying[1]; sometimes in solitary retirement,

[1] 1. Luke v. 16.—2. Ibid. vi. 12. continued all night in prayer.—3. Matt. ix. 24.—4. Matt. xiv. 23. Mark vi. 46. John vi. 15.—5. Luke ix. 18.—6. Ibid. x. 21.—7. Ibid. xi. 1.—8. John xi. 41.—9. Ibid. xvii. 1—26.—10. Matt. xxvi. 39. Mark xiv. 35. Luke xxii. 41.—11. Matt. xxvi. 42. Mark xiv. 39.—12. Matt. xxvi. 44.—13. Luke xxiii. 34.—14. Matt. xxvii. 46. Mark xv. 34.—15. Matt. xxvii. 50. Mark xv. 37. Luke xxiii. 46.

ment, sometimes in public ejaculation. On some occasions we are merely told that he prayed; on others, the substance, or the very words of his petitions are preserved. The general tenor of his prayers, even on the most anxious occasions, is "*thy will not mine be done.*" Yet in two or three of these instances, though the prayer is pious and submissive, it is hardly the prayer of a common mortal to the infinite Creator. Twice[1], as it seems, he used these words: "I thank thee, O "Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that "thou hast hid these things from the wise "and prudent, and hast revealed them "unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it "seemed good in thy sight." Amidst all the respect and propriety of this solemn thanksgiving, there is, as it appears, an intimate knowledge of the counsels of the Father implied, and almost expressed in

[1] See No. 3 and 6.

 it,

it, which denotes an entire participation in them. So also in his ejaculation at the grave of Lazarus, "I knew that thou "hearest me always." John xi. 42.

But, whatever may be thought of these instances, the long address, which occupies the whole seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel, contains undoubtedly many things of this kind. It begins, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy "Son, that thy Son may glorify thee." Afterwards he says, "and now I come to "thee;" expressing a perfect assurance of his removal to heaven. But in the conclusion there are such intimations, as could proceed only from the Son of God. "Father, *I will* that they also whom thou "hast given me be with me where I am; "that they may behold my glory, which "thou hast given me; for thou lovedst "me before the foundation of the world. "O righteous Father, the world hath not "known

"known thee, but I have known thee[1]." Thus, even in his prayers was Jesus more than man, and clearly manifested his divine origin.

It is by considerations such as these, that we may be enabled rightly to answer that question, which he put to the Pharisees, and which they, with all their pretended wisdom, could not answer. Why it was that David, in the Spirit, speaking of him who was to be *his* Son, according to the flesh, called him also LORD[2]. It was because the Holy Ghost, the Spirit by whom he spake, suggested to him that he would be also LORD: and the proper Son of that Eternal Being, on whose right hand he was to sit.

Let us look yet further into the subject, and observe his conduct and deportment,

[1] John xi. 24, 25.
[2] Matt. xxii. 43. Mark xii. 37. Luke xx. 44.

on

on several great occasions. Every one who has read St. Luke's narrative of his first public declaration of his office, in the synagogue at Nazareth [1], must have been moved and impressed by the uncommon dignity of the transaction. He stood up in the Synagogue to read on the Sabbath-day, "as his custom was *, and the book of Isaiah being given to him, he read from it the following words. "The Spirit of "the Lord is upon me, because he hath "anointed me to preach the Gospel to the "poor; he hath sent me to heal the bro-"ken-hearted, to preach deliverance to "the captives, and recovering of sight to "the blind, to set at liberty them that are "bruised, to preach the acceptable year "of the Lord."—The solemn closing of the book, with these few words, "this "day is this scripture fulfilled in your

[1] Luke iv. 16—20.

* Here we may observe, that his custom was to observe all the ordinances of the Law.

"ears;"

"ears;" the fastening of all eyes upon him, as he returned to his seat; the wonder of the people, at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, while they bare witness to his just claim of being the expected Messiah; all these things prove that there was a solemnity in the whole transaction, which filled the hearers with the highest admiration of the person thus addressing them. Inherent dignity, and the most amiable condescension were the characters which then shone forth in the blessed speaker, in a degree which the historian of his life could neither have feigned nor imagined. What human mind could have figured to itself the dignity of the Messiah, the great object of all prophecy; or the condescension of the Son of God, who had come, as foretold, to visit his *own* people, and to *be made* the Son of Man?

In a scene of the most opposite character, at the other extremity of his short career,

career, when he was seized by the unjust violence of his enemies and was meekly yielding to it, his dignity broke forth with momentary splendour, in a short remonstrance to one of his disciples, who was disposed to repel force by force. "Thinkest thou that I cannot "now pray to my Father, and he shall "presently give me more than twelve "legions of angels[1]." This he could have done, and doubtless many other things, had he not preferred fulfilling the Scriptures, and completing the work of divine love, which he had undertaken. If it be objected that he speaks not here of what he could do by his own power, let it be also remarked, that he speaks without any doubt of the result of his application, had he been disposed to make it; which surely was much more than any mere man could, under such cirumstances, have promised to himself.

[1] Matt. xxvi. 53.

But

But the times, when he spoke most clearly of his own dignity and power, were when he alluded to his future coming to judgment, or presiding at the great tribunal of the last day. On these occasions, he speaks not as a humble mortal, looking forward to that which he had reason to hope, but as an exalted personage, having a proper dignity of his own, which it well became him to assert. He cannot be suspected of boasting, which was completely opposite to his character; yet when Nathanael wondered at a comparatively trifling instance of his power, he replied, "Because I said unto "thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, "believest thou? thou shalt see greater "things than these.—Verily, verily I say "unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven "opened, and the angels of God ascend-"ing and descending upon the Son of "Man[1]." Whether he alluded here to

[1] John i. 50, 51.

his

his last and most glorious appearance, or merely to that which took place when he finally departed from his disciples, is of little importance to our present question. If to the latter, they actually lived to see the prophecy fulfilled. If to the more illustrious instance, which seems probable, it coincides exactly with his other declarations on the same subject. In either case, the declaration arose, assuredly, from his exact knowledge of the truth, and not from any vain desire to attract admiration, or excite astonishment.

There are instances, however, when his language is yet more lofty; and these are when he speaks decidedly of coming to judgment. "The Son of Man shall "send forth *his* angels (not the angels of "God) and they shall gather out of *his* "kingdom all things that offend, and them "that do iniquity[1]." At another time, he

[1] Matt. xiii. 41.

says,

says, "the Son of Man shall come in the "glory of his Father, *and in his own* "*glory*, with the holy angels, and re- "ward every man according to his "works[1]." In another passage, "Then "shall they see the Son of Man, coming "in the clouds of heaven, with power "and great glory, and he shall send *his* "angels, with a great sound of a trumpet, "and shall gather together *his* elect, "from the four winds, from the uttermost "parts of the earth[2]." Having already cited the most magnificent of all these declarations, ("When the Son of Man shall "come in his glory," &c.) as one of those prophecies which the disciples could not have invented, I shall here omit it[3]; merely saying, of all these passages collectively, that if they express not a dignity

[1] Matt. xvi. 27. blended with Mark viii. 38. and Luke ix. 26.

[2] Matt. xxiv. 30, 31, blended with Mark xiii. 26. See also Luke xxi. 27. [3] See p. 177.

far

far superior to any that mere man could hope, expect, anticipate, or sustain, my perception of the force of words must, in some way or other, be strangely erroneous. Till this, however, be proved, I appeal boldly to the feelings of all who shall read these passages, thus considered together, whether he who uttered them were not conscious of being no less truly the Son of God, than the Son of Man. Had Jesus been vain-glorious, which most certainly he was not, he could not have ventured, as mere man, and still under his probation upon earth, to boast in such a style as this, and to promise to himself such transcendent exaltation. Let those who venture to load him with the imputation of such vain-glory consider with what countenance they shall meet him, when all that he foretold shall be completely realized! When he shall come in the clouds of heaven, to judge the whole race of mankind.

Sometimes he even took upon himself to

to do the acts, which are usually attributed to the Father. Thus of every one who should see the Son and believe on him, he said, "*I will raise him up* at the last "day[1]." In another place, clearly implying that nothing could be superior to the Son of God, he said, "If *the Son* "shall make you free, ye shall be free "indeed,—for the *Son abideth ever*[2]." If he would not have said these things of himself, without just reason; so neither would his Evangelists, without authority, have ventured to impute them to him. Venerating him as they did, and designing, at all events, to bear honourable testimony to him; they would not have invented for him words which the Jews considered as blasphemy; and which, if he were only a mere man, could not well be described by any other term.

Let us not, however, forget that, accord-

[1] John vi. 40. [2] John viii. 35, 36.

ing

ing to the testimony of three Evangelists, he was twice declared aloud, by a divine Voice from heaven, to be "the beloved "Son of God, in whom he was well "pleased [1]," once at his baptism, and again at his transfiguration *. St. John also bears witness, that, on another occasion, when he said aloud, in pious ejaculation, "Father, glorify thy name," there came a Voice from heaven, saying, "I "have both glorified it, and will glorify "it again [2]." These divine testimonies

[1] Matt. iii. 17. Mark i. 11. Luke iii. 22. also Matt. xvii. 5. Mark ix. 7. Luke ix. 35.

* Observe too that St. Peter, in one of his epistles, expressly confirms this transaction; the majesty of Jesus displayed in it; and the very words of the Voice from heaven. "For he re- "ceived from God the Father honour and glory, "when there came such a voice to him from the "excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in "whom I am well pleased. And this voice which "came from heaven we heard, when we were with "him in the holy mount." 2 Pet. i. 17, 18.

[2] John xii. 28.

may

may be thought even more conclusive than his own; for as he said, with characteristic humility, "If I honour my- "self" (that is, if I *alone* assume honour to myself) "my honour is nothing; "it is my Father that honoureth me, of "whom ye say that he is your God [1]." Him therefore whom God thus honoured, let not man presume to dishonour; and what dishonour to him can be greater than that of teaching, that his most solemn words deserve no credit, in their plain, natural, and necessary sense; and that his expressions and actions tend to lead men into the most dangerous and fatal errors?

Having seen all these previous intimations of his transcendent dignity, we can no longer wonder, that, when his humiliation was completely finished, when he was now glorified, as man, and enabled to resume, if he had not already resumed, his

[1] John viii. 54.

proper

proper glory in heaven; he scrupled not, in the solemn form of Baptism then delivered, to join himself, on equal terms, with the Father and the Holy Ghost. "Go," said he, "and teach all nations, "baptizing them in the name of *the Fa-* "*ther*, (the acknowledged source of all "being) *the Son*, (himself, Jesus Christ) "and the *Holy Ghost*[1]; (that divine Comforter, whom he was about to send to his disciples.) Words above all others memorable*; and which they who attempt to divest them of their plain and natural import, will always find a powerful obstacle to their wishes.

Such then was Christ, upon his own representation, confirmed in so many, and so decisive ways. That there was no settled design in the Evangelists, to exalt

[1] Matt. xxviii. 19.

* See this argument most powerfully urged by the late Bishop Horne, in his Sermon on this text. Sermons, vol. v. p. 417.

him

him above measure, is evident from the casual and incidental manner in which these intimations are thrown out: intimations, which separately indeed might be overlooked; but which, brought together by considerate observation, form a body of evidence more conclusive than can usually be made to bear upon any object of human knowledge.

CHAPTER XV.

OF OUR LORD'S APPEARANCES AFTER HIS RESURRECTION.

THERE is not perhaps any instance in which the strict and scrupulous veracity of the Evangelists, however eminent in all their writings, more remarkably appears, than in their accounts of the events which took place between our Saviour's resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into Heaven. Where was his abode during those forty days? with whom did he associate? how did he subsist? They probably knew not:—and, for that best reason, they have not attempted to relate. They have not even ventured a surmise upon the subject. They have recorded merely

merely his appearances as they actually happened, and these not very numerous. But, of any intermediate circumstances, they have not once presumed to speak. This has even been made an objection to that part of their history, and it was easy to foresee that the objection would be made. Nothing, however, could tempt these scrupulous historians to deviate in the least from the strictest line of veracity. They have recorded only what they knew.

To this part of the subject I approach with awe! But, for that very reason, I trust that I shall not handle it improperly. The truth I conceive to be this. Our Lord most truly arose from the dead on the third day, but it was not with the merely human body which he had before. His human body, not cast away nor annihilated, but *transformed*, had now undergone that glorious change, which his select disciples had seen anticipated, at the

time of his transfiguration *. It was that change which, according to St. Paul, will happen also to the faithful, who shall remain alive at the last day, when he says, " we shall not all sleep, but we shall all " be *changed* [1]," —" for this corruptible " must put on incorruption, and this mor- " tal must put on immortality."—It was that transformation which he will also work in us, when the time comes that he " shall change our vile body, that it may " be fashioned like unto his glorious " body [2]." His mortal task was finished; he was now glorified; and his body was not merely a natural, but a glorified body.

Every thing was now changed; and to use the words of the most sagacious writer, perhaps, who has ever handled

* St. Peter says, alluding to that very transaction, we " were eye-witnesses of his majesty." 2 Peter ii. 16.

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 52, &c. [2] Philip. iii. 21.

this

this subject *; " what was natural to him " before, was now miraculous; what was " before miraculous was now natural †." He had now no abode upon earth; none, at least, suited to the infirmities of human nature: and whether he rendered himself visible, or tangible; whether he walked, conversed, or eat with his disciples, it was all by miracle. Let it not be thought that, if so, he put a deceit upon his disciples, and appeared to them what he was not. If every natural body of man, can be changed by the working of almighty power into a glorified body, without ceasing to be the same body, (which we

* Bishop Horsley, from whose four Sermons on the Resurrection, the leading ideas of this chapter have been drawn. The whole of those discourses should be carefully read and considered. Bp. Horsley is one of those original writers, who, when they are sound, are also luminous. He not only illustrates the subject which he takes in hand, but also diffuses a permanent light on every connected topic.

† Nine Sermons, &c. p. 202.

 are

are taught to expect, concerning those who are to rise with Christ) there can be no difficulty in believing the same of Christ himself. Consequently when he enabled the human senses of the disciples to perceive that body, he only enabled them to perceive the truth, which naturally they could not have discerned. He truly rose from the dead, but he rose in a glorified state.

His abode was no longer upon earth. Where it was we are not told. The historians themselves apparently knew not. It is matter of conjecture only. It may be presumed from St. John's Gospel, that it was with the Father in heaven, where it has been since, and will be for ever[1]. For though he had not yet ascended thither, when he appeared to Mary Magdalen in the garden, his words seem to imply, that he was immediately

[1] John xx. 17.

about

about to do so. "Go to my brethren, and "say unto them, I ascend unto my Fa- "ther and your Father, and to my God "and your God."

From his unearthly abode, wheresoever it was, he appeared to his disciples, as often as he thought fit, throughout the space of forty days from his resurrection: and his visible ascent to heaven, at the end of that period, marked distinctly to them, that they were no longer to expect to see him. His appearances, during this period, were short, sudden, and mysterious. He came when the doors were shut, he vanished without their being opened. His body was no longer restrained by the obstacles which confine our grosser frames; and, even from the tomb, there is reason to believe that he had arisen, before it was opened by the angels; since no appearance of his coming forth was seen*. Yet

* Horsley, ut supra, p. 202.

 was

was he not a mere spirit, but had, according to his own testimony, "flesh and "bones[1]." But, as in the days of his humiliation, he could by miracle make his body incapable of being seen or touched (as when he passed through enraged crowds unperceived[2]), so now when he had a body, not naturally the object of human senses, he could, when he thought fit, by a contrary miracle, make it both visible and tangible.

But whatever we may conjecture, concerning this astonishing part of our Lord's history, and whether our surmises be well or ill-founded, the point which belongs to our present argument is this, that the Evangelists all equally refrained from the endeavour to explain, what to them probably, as well as to us, was mysterious. The circumstances that actually happened they faithfully recorded; but how they

[1] Luke xxiv. 39. [2] Ibid. iv. 30. John viii. 59.

were

were brought about, or why in one manner rather than in another, on these things they are entirely silent. That the Lord was once seen by five hundred brethren together, St. Paul alone has told us[1]; but from St. Matthew we may collect that, when he was so seen, it was by his own appointment[2]. Even then his appearance was such, that though in general the beholders worshipped him, yet some doubted. That is, probably, they doubted for a moment, till he came forward and addressed them, in the remarkable words, "All "power is given to me in heaven and "earth[3]."

Thus then, to the very end have these wonderful historians, severally and collectively, preserved their uniform character of simply relating facts, without attempting to explain, or make reflections upon them. They knew the force of

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 6. [2] Matt. xxviii. 16. [3] Ibid. xxviii.

 truth,

truth, and left it to support itself. By so doing, they have rendered this latter part of their history peculiarly obscure and difficult. But that was an inferior consideration. To add one tittle, beyond what they strictly and positively knew, and could distinctly testify, on their recollection and knowledge, was inconsistent with their principles and plan.

They pretended not that Jesus was shown to all the people *. In fact, it ought not to have been expected. While his humiliation continued, he was seen by all the people. They beheld his person, they saw his miracles, they heard his discourses. They had then their chance for seeing and believing. To this end, the common use of their senses, and the honest employment of their reason were sufficient.

* Bp. Horsley has pointed out that "showed "him *openly*" in Acts x. 40, is a wrong translation. It should be "made him visible." "Dedit mani- "festum fieri." See p. 202.

But, in his glorified state, to see him was a miracle; and miracles are never performed for the conviction of wilful obstinacy. His appearances were now the manifestations of a being infinitely superior to mortality; and these could not be vouchsafed, except to the faithful and devout. If those favoured persons were fully competent, in number and credibility, as undoubtedly they were, to testify the facts to the world, every end was answered. When St. Paul says, that the Lord was seen last of all by *him*, "as by one born out of due time [1]," he seems to speak of those appearances from heaven, with which he was peculiarly favoured *; yet does he class this mode of viewing him, exactly with his last appearances to the disciples upon earth. The ap-

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 8.

* "As one born out of due time," ib. that is, born into new life, too late to see him in the flesh.

 pearances,

pearances, in fact, were equally miraculous, and equally demonstrative of the peculiar favour of the Lord, in granting such a manifestation of himself.

Such is the wonderful history of the forty days, between the resurrection and the ascension of our Lord, which the four Evangelists have related with so much faithfulness, and yet with such becoming caution. Men who had invented would have laboured also to make their inventions intelligible; to clear up doubts, and explain difficulties. They, in this case, as in all others, were satisfied with relating facts, leaving to others to explain them, if they could. Explained or not, they were equally facts; and the testimony of the witnesses equally competent to support them, against all gainsayers.

CONCLUSION.

We have thus seen, in every instance, that the actions, the discourses, the parables, the prophecies of our Lord, which the Evangelists have recorded, either singly, or two, three, or all the four, in similar words, but without combination, and without copying, are such as those writers could not possibly have invented, drawn, or composed from any resources of their own. When indeed we contemplate the wonderful picture, which they have all alike displayed; the mysterious combination of characters apparent in the subject of their history, the Lord Jesus Christ; the Son of Man, and the Son of God, and perfect in both relations.—There all gentleness, humility and piety; here dis-

displaying such a dignity as never before or since was vested in the human form: a Being despised, insulted, persecuted, suffering, yet of unwearied and inexhaustible benevolence;—dying on a cross, yet promising to be present with his disciples to the very end of time:—When I say, we consider this wonderful personage, whom four different historians have thus represented to us, in histories always varied, more or less, yet always consistent; often so alike as to prove that they were studious to preserve the very words which they had heard; yet often so differing, as to satisfy the reader that the coincidence was not produced by design or combination; in narratives, sometimes more contracted, sometimes more full, yet always leading to the same general and most wonderful results. When we thus consider these things, we cannot surely turn aside from the inevitable conclusion of right reason, that such a character exceeded all reach of human imagination to delineate;

delineate; such a history defied all stretch of human ingenuity to invent. Truth and truth alone, could have been the prototype of the character; the foundation, substance, and support of every word and action there recorded.

If this conclusion be not secure from all possibility of error, little cause have we to be proud of that high privilege of reason, which can thus fail us when we most require its aid; leaving us in uncertainty, where all our highest interests urgently demand that we should see and know the truth.

Of the perfection of this faculty in himself, it becomes not any man to boast; but they who have exercised it with care, for a considerable series of years, and generally with satisfactory results, may surely be allowed to feel some confidence in its conclusions. Such confidence I confess myself to feel; and should as soon be

be led to doubt of my existence, as of the veracity of the Evangelists, thus made clear to my understanding. I have therefore said in my title-page, that the veracity of the Evangelists is "demon-" strated," meaning, certainly, nothing more than a moral Demonstration, the subject being capable of nothing more. To the apprehension of my reason, it has been so *demonstrated.* But reason operates differently in different minds, and if there should be persons, to whom these arguments do not appear conclusive, may they be led by other means to that which certainly is the truth, however well or ill particular persons may chance to argue for it. We can offer only what we have, with our best hopes that what we offer may be useful. But God can enlighten every man, by the means which he knows to be best; and to him we must commit the result of all our cares and all our labours, in the service of truth, and of mankind.

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON P. 37.

Fischer, a German critic, thus speaks of the use of the Septuagint Version, to illustrate the New Testament.

Omnino omnes adolescentes, qui ingenium orationis Novi T. Græcæ pernoscere cupiant, ii assiduam versionis Vet. T. septuaginta viralis lectionem, et diligentem ejus cum libris Hebraicis comparationem, ita habebunt sibi commendatissimam, ut confidant se hujus assiduitatis diligentiæque auxilio consecuturos esse idoneam facultatem et intelligendi et interpretandi, commentarios Evangeliorum, et Epistolarum Apostolicarum. *Fischer Pref. Ed. Sec. in Leusden de Hebraismis,* p. xxxviii.

APPENDIX

No. I.

MIRACLES OF OUR LORD

AS REFERRED TO IN

CHAPTER X.

1. WATER turned into Wine	John ii.
2. Nobleman's Son of Capernaum	John iv.
3. Passing unseen through the Multitude	Luke iv.
4. Miraculous Draught of Fishes	Luke v.
5. Demoniac cured	Mark i. Luke iv.
6. Peter's Wife's Mother cured	Matt. viii. Mark i. Luke iv.
7. *Multitudes* healed	Matt. viii. Mark i. Luke iv.
8. *Also throughout Galilee*	Matt. iv. Mark i.
9. A leper healed	Matt. viii. Mark i. Luke v.
10. The Paralytic, let down in a Bed	Matt. ix. Mark ii. Luke v.

11. The

11. The impotent Man, at Bethesda .... John v.
12. The withered Hand, on the Sabbath — Matt. xii. Mark iii. Luke vi.
13. *Many healed* ..... — Matt. xii. Mark iii.
14. *Many*, and some by mere Touch.... Luke vi.
15. Centurion's Servant ..... — Matt. viii. Luke vii.
16. The Widow's Son raised, at Nain .. Luke vii.
17. *Various Miracles* appealed to ..... — Matt. xi. Luke vii.
18. *Many healed*..... Matt. ix.
19. A Demoniac ..... — Matt. ix. Mark iii. Luke xi.
20. The Tempest stilled .... — Matt. viii. Mark iv. Luke viii.
21. The Legion of Devils cast out* .... — Matt. viii. Mark iv. Luke viii.
22. The Woman who touched his Garment — Matt. ix. Mark v. Luke viii.
23. The Daughter of Jairus raised ..... — Matt. ix. Mark v. Luke viii.
24. Two blind Men ..... Matt. ix.
25. A dumb Demoniac ..... Matt. ix.
26. Power given to the Apostles to heal — Matt. x. Mark vi. Luke ix.
27. *Many Sick healed* ..... — Matt. xiv. Luke ix.

* St. Matthew says two demoniacs, the others mention only one. Probably one was more remarkable than the other.

28. Five

28. Five Thousand fed ..... — Matt. xiv. Mark vi. Luke ix. John vi.
29. He walks on the Sea ..... — Matt. xiv. Mark vi. John vi.
30. Ship immediately at its Destination John vi.
31. As many as touched healed ..... — Matt. xiv. Mark vi.
32. Daughter of Syrophœnician Woman — Matt. xv. Mark vii.
33. Deaf and dumb Man..... Mark vii.
34. *Multitudes healed* ..... Matt. xv.
35. Four Thousand fed..... — Matt. xv. Mark viii.
36. A blind Man cured..... Mark viii.
37. The great Miracle of the Transfiguration ..... — Matt. xvii. Mark ix. Luke ix.
38. A deaf and dumb Demoniac ..... — Matt. xvii. Mark ix. Luke ix.
39. A Fish brings the tribute Money.... Matt. xvii.
40. The Man blind from his Birth ..... John ix.
41. The infirm Woman restored..... Luke xiii.
42. The Dropsy healed on the Sabbath.. Luke xiv.
43. Ten Lepers cleansed..... Luke xvii.
44. Lazarus raised from the Dead ..... John xi.
45. Blind Bartimeus cured* ..... — Matt. xx. Mark x. Luke xviii.
46. *Many blind and lame* ..... Matt. xxi.

* N. B. St. Matthew says two blind men. Of whom doubtless Bartimeus was the most remarkable.

47. The

47. The barren Fig-tree destroyed .... Matt. xxi. Mark xi.

48. The Ear of Malchus restored ..... Matt. xxvi. Mark xiv. Luke xxii. John xviii.

49. Miraculous Draught of Fishes, after his Resurrection..... John xxi.

50. The clearing of the Temple twice; doubtful whether miraculous or not, 1st Time ..... John ii.

2d Time ..... Matt. xxi. Mark xi. Luke xix.

APPENDIX

No. II.

INDEX

TO

OUR SAVIOUR'S PARABLES.

SEE CHAPTER XI.

1. Of the Blind leading the Blind .... Luke vi.
2. Of the House built on a Rock..... Matt. vii. Luke vi.
3. Of the two Debtors ..... Luke vii.
4. Of the relapsing Demoniac ..... Matt. xii. Luke xi.
5. Of the rich Man, and his vain Hopes Luke xii.
6. Of the Lord returning from a Wedding Luke xii.
7. Of the barren Fig-tree ..... Luke xiii.
8. Of the Sower ..... Matt. xiii. Mark iv. Luke viii.
9. Of the Tares ..... Matt. xiii.
0. Of the Seed sown ..... Mark iv.

Of the mustard Seed ..... Matt. xiii. Mark iv.

12. Of

12. Of the Leaven ..... Matt. xiii.
13. Of the hid Treasure ..... Ibid.
14. Of the Merchant seeking Pearls .... Ibid.
15. Of the Net cast into the Sea..... Ibid.
16. Of the good Householder ..... Ibid.
17. Of the new Cloth and old Garment { Matt. ix. Mark ii. Luke v.
18. Of the new Wine and old Bottles .. { Matt. ix. Mark ii. Luke v.
19. Of the Plant, not planted by God .. Matt. xv.
20. Of the lost Sheep ..... { Matt. xviii. Luke xv.
21. Of the unmerciful Servant ..... Matt. viii.
22. Of the Shepherd and the Sheep .... John x.
23. Of the good Samaritan ..... Luke x.
24. Of the Guest choosing the highest Seat Luke xiv.
25. Of the great Supper .... Ibid.
26. Of the building a Tower ..... Ibid.
27. Of the King preparing for War .... Ibid.
28. Of the Salt ..... Ibid.
29. Of the Piece of Silver lost..... Luke xv.
30. Of the Prodigal Son ..... Ibid.
31. Of the unjust Steward ..... Luke xvi.
32. Of the rich Man and Lazarus ..... Ibid.
33. Of the Master commanding his Servant ..... { Luke xvii.
34. Of the unjust Judge and Widow.... Luke xviii.
35. Of the Pharisee and Publican ..... Ibid.
36. Of the Labourers hired at different Hours ..... { Matt. 20.
37. Of the Ten Pound and Ten Servants Luke xix.
38. Of the professing and the repenting Son ..... { Matt. xxi.

39. Of

39. Of the wicked Husbandmen..... { Matt. xxi. Mark xi. Luke xx.
40. Of the Guests bidden, and the Wedding Garment ..... { Matt. xxii.
41. Of the Fig-tree putting forth Leaves { Matt. xxiv. Mark xiii. Luke xxi.
42. Of the Thief in the Night..... Matt. xxiv.
43. Of the Man taking a long Journey.. Mark xiii.
44. Of the faithful and unfaithful Servant Matt. xxiv.
45. Of the Ten Virgins ..... Matt. xxv.
46. Of the Talents ..... Ibid.

Perhaps also the following may be added.

47. Children in the Market-place ..... { Matt. xi. Luke vii.
48. The strong Man keeping his House { Matt. xii. Mark iii. Luke ix.

APPENDIX

No. III.

DISCOURSES OF OUR LORD.

REFERRED TO IN

CHAPTER XII.

1. WITH the Woman of Samaria .... John iv.
2. On the Power of forgiving Sins .... Matt. ix. / Mark ii. / Luke v.
3. On God the Father, and the Son.... John v.
4. On the Sabbath ..... Matt. xii. / Mark ii. / Luke vi.
5. Sermon on the Mount ..... Mat.v.vi.vii. / Luke vi.
6. On disregarding his mighty Works Matt. xi. / Luke x.
7. On his casting out Devils..... Matt. xii. / Mark iii. / Luke ix.
8. On seeking a Sign (See 20. inf.).... Matt. xii. / Luke ix.
9. Reproves the Pharisees, Scribes, &c. Ibid.
10. Instructs his Disciples and the People Luke xii.

11. On

11. On the Galileans who were slain.... Luke xiii.
12. To those who wished to follow him.. Matt. viii. / Luke ix.
13. On eating with Publicans, &c. .... Matt. ix. / Mark ii. / Luke v.
14. On Fasting..... Matt. ix. / Mark ii. / Luke v.
15. To the Twelve, when sent out .... Matt. x. / Mark vi. / Luke ix.
16. To the Multitude at Capernaum .... John vi.
17. To the Twelve there ..... Ibid.
18. With the Scribes, &c. on Ablutions and Traditions ..... Matt. xv. / Mark vii.
19. With the Syrophœnician Woman .. Matt. xv. / Mark vii.
20. On seeking a Sign, again ..... Matt. xvi. / Mark viii.
21. On the Leaven of the Pharisees, &c. Matt. xvi. / Mark viii.
22. With his Disciples, on the Reports concerning him..... Matt. xvi. / Mark viii. / Luke ix.
23. On the Coming of Elias ..... Matt. xvii. / Mark ix.
24. On ambitious Views ..... Matt. xviii. / Mark ix. / Luke ix.
25. On unauthorized Followers ..... Mark ix. / Luke ix.
26. On Offences..... Matt. xviii. / Mark ix.
27. On Forgiveness (See No. 40) ..... Matt. vii.
28. To the seventy Disciples when sent out ..... Luke x.

29. With

29. With his Brethren ..... John vii.
30. At the Feast of Tabernacles..... Ibid.
31. With the Scribes, Pharisees, and unbelieving Jews ..... John viii.
32. To the blind Man to whom he had given Sight ..... John ix.
33. To the Pharisees, &c..... John x.
34. To the Seventy on their Return .... Luke x.
35. Again teaches his Disciples to pray* Luke xi.
36. On healing on the Sabbath ..... Luke xiii.
37. On the Question, who shall be saved Ibid.
38. On the Difficulty of following him.. Luke xiv.
39. On serving God and Mammon, &c... Luke xvi.
40. On Offences and Forgiveness (See No. 26 and 27) ..... Luke xvii.
41. On himself and the Father, at the Feast of Dedication ..... John x.
42. To the Pharisees, on Divorces†.... Matt. xix. Mark x.
43. On blessing the young Children.... Matt. xix. Mark x. Luke xviii.
44. To the rich Man, on attaining Eternal Life..... Matt. xix. Mark x. Luke xviii.
45. On the ambitious Request of Zebedee's Children ..... Matt. xx. Luke x.
46. On the Glorifying of the Son of Man John xii.
47. On Unbelief and Faith ..... Ibid.
48. On paying Tribute to Cæsar ..... Matt. xxii. Mark xii. Luke xx.

* First told by St. Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount.

† See also Luke xvi. xviii.

49. On what is called the Levirate Marriage ..... Matt. xxii. Mark xii. Luke xx.
50. On the chief Commandment ..... Matt. xxii. Mark xii.
51. On Christ being Lord ..... Matt. xxii. Mark xii. Luke xx.
52. He reproves the Scribes and Pharisees Matt. xxiii. Mark xii. Luke xx.
53. On the Widow's Mite ..... Mark xii. Luke xxi.
54. On the Strife for Pre-eminence .... Luke xxii.
55. On washing the Feet of the Disciples John xiii.
56. On loving one another..... Ibid.
57. He comforts his Disciples ..... John xiv.
58. Institution of the Sacrament*..... Matt. xxvi. Mark xiv. Luke xxii.
59. His final Discourse, and Commands to his Disciples..... John xv.xvi.
60. His solemn Prayer ..... John xvii.

AFTER HIS RESURRECTION.

61. With the two Disciples going to Emmaus ..... Luke xxiv.
62. Explanatory Discourse, to the Eleven Luke xxiv.
63. His final Commission to his Disciples Matt. xxviii.
64. His Command to wait at Jerusalem Acts i.

* Also St. Paul, 1 Cor. xi. 25.

APPENDIX

No. IV.

PROPHECIES OF OUR LORD,

REFERRED TO IN

CHAPTER XIII.

1. John i. 51.
2. —— ii. 19.
3. —— iv. 21.
4. —— iv. 35.
5. Matt. iv. 19.
   Mark i. 17.
   Luke v. 10.
6. John v. 25.
7. Matt. v. 18.
8. —— vii. 21.
9. —— viii. 11.
10. Matt. xi. 22.
    Luke x. 14.
11. Matt. xii. 31.
    Mark iii. 28.
    Luke xii. 10.
12. Matt. xii. 40.
    Luke xi. 30.
13. Matt. xii. 45.
14. Luke xii. 2, 8, 12.
15. —— xii. 40, &c.
16. —— xii. 49, &c.
17. Matt. xiii. 30, &c.
18. —— xiii. 40, &c.
19. —— xiii. 49.
20. Matt. ix. 15.
    Mark ii. 20.
    Luke v. 35.
21. Matt. x. 15.
    Mark vi. 11.
22. Matt. x. 16—42.
23. John vi. 35, 54, 58.

24. Matt. xv. 13.
25. —— xvi. 4.
26. Matt. xvi. 18, 21, &c.
    Mark viii. 31.
    Luke ix. 22.
27. Matt. xvi. 27.
    Mark viii. 37.
    Luke ix. 26.
28. Matt. xvii. 22.
    Mark ix. 31.
    Luke ix. 44.
29. Matt. xviii. 18.
30. John vii. 33.
31. —— vii. 37.
32. —— viii. 21.
33. —— viii. 28.
34. —— x. 15.
35. Luke xiii. 24—30.
36. —— xiii. 34, 35.
37. —— xvii. 22—37.
38. Matt. xix. 28—30.
39. Matt. xix. 18.
    Mark x. 32.
    Luke xviii. 31.
40. Matt. xx. 33.
    Mark x. 39.
41. Luke ix. 42.
42. John xii. 32.
43. —— xii. 48.
44. Matt. xxi. 21.
    Mark xi. 22.
45. Matt. xxiii. 38.
46. Matt. xxiv. 2—41.
    Mark xiii. 2—33.
    Luke xxii. 6—34.
47. Matt. xxv. 31.
48. —— xxvi. 12, 13.
    Mark xiv. 8, 9.
    John xii. 7.
49. Matt. xxvi. 21, &c.
    Mark xiv. 18.
    Luke xxii. 21.
    John xiii. 21.
50. Matt. xxvi. 31.
    Mark xiv. 27.
51. Matt. xxvi. 34.
    Mark xiv. 30.
    Luke xxii. 34.
    John xiii. 38.
52. —— xiv. 12—21.
53. —— xv. 20 to xvi. 28.
54. Matt. xxvi. 45.
    Mark xiv. 41.
55. Matt. xxvi. 64.
    Mark xiv. 62.
    Luke xxii. 69.
56. —— xxiii. 28—31.
57. —— xxiii. 43.
58. —— xxiv. 47—49.
59. Mark xvi. 17, 18.
60. John xxi. 18.
61. —— xxiv. 22.
62. Matt. xxviii. 20.
63. Acts i. 8.

Besides these direct prophecies, many of the parables have also a prophetic design. As that of the *sower*, the *tares*, the *seed cast into the ground*, the *mustard seed:* but more particularly the *prodigal son*, the *labourers in the vineyard*, the *cruel husbandmen* and some more.

APPENDIX

No. V.

THREE NARRATIVES

OF

ST. PAUL'S CONVERSION,

ALLUDED TO IN THE

NOTE ON P. 172.

Acts ix.

1. And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the High Priest.

2. And desired of him letters, to Damascus, to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

Acts xxii.

4. And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.
5. As also the High Priest doth bear me witness and all the estate of the elders, from whom also I received Letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus,

to bring them which were there, bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

Acts xxvi.

9. I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.
10. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief Priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.

11. And I punished

Acts ix.

3. And as he journeyed, he came near to Damascus,

and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven.

4. And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice

saying unto him Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

5. And he said, Who art thou Lord? And the Lord said,

I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

6. And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord,

Acts xxii.

6. And it came to pass, that as I made my journey and was come nigh to Damascus,

about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

7. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice

saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

8. And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said to me,

I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

10. And I said,

Acts xxvi.

them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and, being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

12. Whereupon, as I went to Damascus, with authority and commission from the chief Priests *,

13. At mid-day, O King, I saw in the way a light from heaven, *above the brightness of the sun*, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me.

14. And when we were all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice, speaking to me in the Hebrew tongue and saying, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

15. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said,

I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

* See ix. 1, and xxii. 5.

Acts ix.

What wilt thou have me to do?
And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee, what

thou must do.

7. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless,

hearing a voice,

but seeing no man.

8. And Saul arose, and when his eyes were open he saw no man,

but they led him by the hand,

Acts xxii.

what shall I do, Lord?
And the Lord said unto me, arise, and go into Damascus, and there it shall be told thee, of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

9. And they that were with me, saw indeed the light, and were afraid, but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

10. And when

I could not see, for the glory of that light, being led by the hand,

Acts xxvi.

16. But rise, stand upon thy feet,

for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister, and a witness, of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things, in the which I will appear unto thee.

17. Delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles unto whom I now send thee.

18. To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light; and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them, which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Acts ix.	*Acts* xxii.	*Acts* xxvi.
	of them that were with me,	
they brought him into Damascus.	I came into Damascus.	
9. And he was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink.		
		19. Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.

☞ In the remainder of the history the parallelism ceases; the transactions being related almost exclusively by St. Luke, in the tenor of his history, as continued in the ninth Chapter.

THE END.

ERRATA.

Page 40, note, line 3, *for* Θεῦ *read* Θεὸς

Page 49, line 11, *for* Prooably *read* Probably

Page 172, note, *for* No. VI. *read* No. V.

Page 180, note, line 9, *for* No. V. *read* No. VI.

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APPENDIX

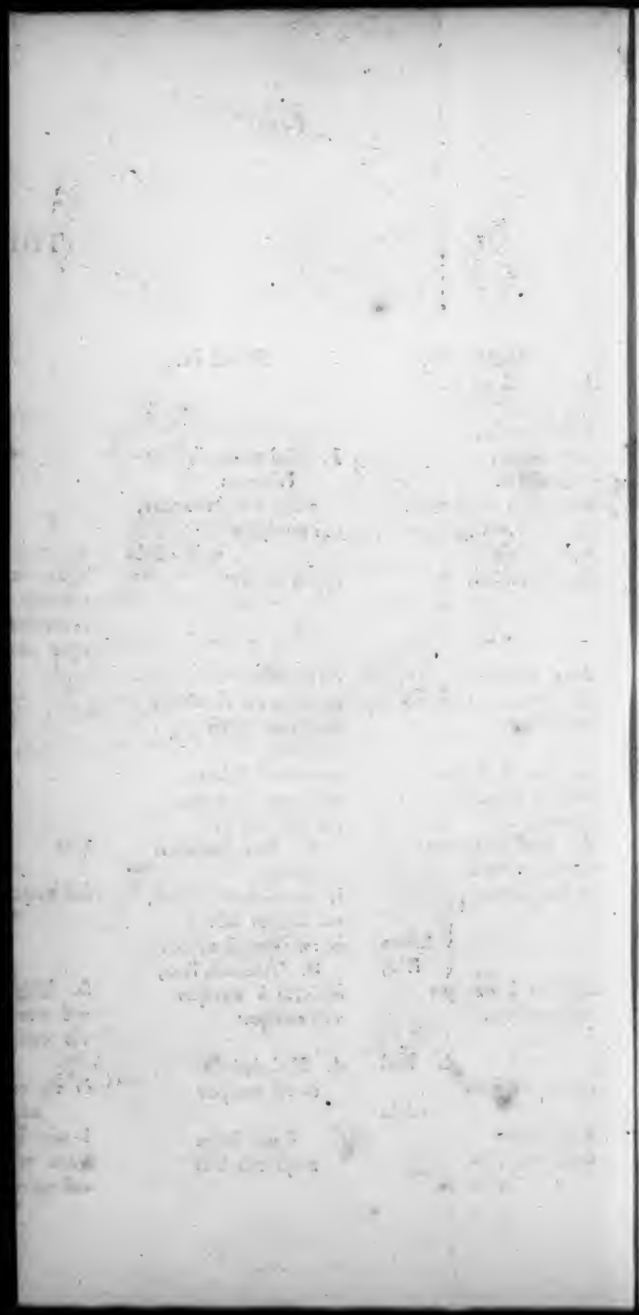
No. VI.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER,

REFERRED TO IN PAGE 180.

Matt. xiii.	*Mark* iv.	*Luke* viii.
1. Εν δὲ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ ἐξελθὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ τῆς οἰκίας, ἐκάθητο παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν.	1. Καὶ πάλιν ἤρξατο διδάσκειν παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν,	
2. Καὶ συνήχθησαν πρὸς αὐτὸν ὄχλοι πολλοί,	καὶ συνήχθη πρὸς αὐτὸν ὄχλος πολὺς·	4. συνιόντος δὲ ὄχλου πολλοῦ, καὶ τῶν κατὰ πόλιν ἐπιπορευομένων πρὸς αὐτον,
ὥστε αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ πλοῖον ἐμβάντα καθῆσθαι·	ὥστε αὐτὸν εμβάντα εἰς τὸ πλοῖον καθῆσθαι ἐν τῇ θαλάσσῃ.	
καὶ πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος ἐπὶ τὸν αἰγιαλὸν εἱστήκει.	καὶ πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος πρὸς τὴν θάλασσαν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἦν.	
3. Καὶ ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς πολλὰ ἐν παραβολαῖς,	2. Καὶ ἐδίδασκεν αὐτοὺς ἐν παραβολαῖς πολλὰ, καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ αὐτοῦ.	εἶπε διὰ παραβολῆς.
λέγων ἰδού, ἐξῆλθεν ὁ σπείρων τοῦ σπείρειν.	3. Ἀκούετε, ἰδού, ἐξῆλθεν ὁ σπείρων τοῦ σπείραι·	5. Ἐξῆλθεν ὁ σπείρων τοῦ σπείραι τὸν σπόρον αὐτοῦ·
4. Καὶ ἐν τῷ σπείρειν αὐτὸν ἃ μὲν ἔπεσε παρὰ τὴν ὁδὸν	4. Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ σπείρειν ὃ μὲν ἔπεσε παρὰ τὴν ὁδὸν	καὶ ἐν τῷ σπείρειν αὐτὸν, ὃ μὲν ἔπεσε παρα την ὁδὸν καὶ κατεπατήθη,

Matt. xiii.	*Mark* iv.	*Luke* viii.
καὶ ἦλθε τὰ πετεινὰ καὶ κατέφαγεν αὐτά.	καὶ ἦλθε τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ (rej. by Gries.) καὶ κατέφαγεν αὐτό.	καὶ τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κατέφαγεν αὐτό.
5. Ἄλλα δὲ ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὰ πετρώδη, ὅπου οὐκ εἶχε γῆν πολλήν, καὶ εὐθέως ἐξανέτειλε, διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν βάθος γῆς.	5. Ἄλλο δὲ ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὸ πετρῶδες, ὅπου οὐκ εἶχε γῆν πολλήν, καὶ εὐθέως ἐξανέτειλε, διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν βάθος γῆς.	6. Καὶ ἕτερον ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὴν πέτραν, καὶ φυὲν
6. Ἡλίου δὲ ἀνατείλαντος ἐκαυματίσθη· καὶ, διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν ῥίζαν, ἐξηράνθη.	6. Ἡλίου δὲ ἀνατείλαντος ἐκαυματίσθη, καὶ, διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν ῥίζαν, ἐξηράνθη.	ἐξηράνθη διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν ἰκμάδα.
7. Ἄλλα δὲ ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὰς ἀκάνθας, καὶ ἀνέβησαν αἱ ἄκανθαι, καὶ ἀπέπνιξαν αὐτά.	7. Καὶ ἄλλο ἔπεσεν εἰς τὰς ἀκάνθας, καὶ ἀνέβησαν αἱ ἄκανθαι, καὶ συνέπνιξαν αὐτὸ.	7. Καὶ ἕτερον ἔπεσεν ἐν μέσῳ τῶν ἀκανθῶν, καὶ συμφυεῖσαι αἱ ἄκανθαι ἀπέπνιξαν αὐτό.
8. Ἄλλα δὲ ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν τὴν καλὴν, καὶ ἐδίδου καρπὸν, ὃ μὲν ἑκατὸν, ὃ δὲ ἑξήκοντα, ὃ δὲ τριάκοντα.	8. Καὶ ἄλλο ἔπεσεν εἰς τὴν γῆν τὴν καλὴν· καὶ ἐδίδου καρπὸν, ἀναβαίνοντα καὶ αὐξάνοντα· καὶ ἔφερεν ἓν τριάκοντα, καὶ ἓν ἑξήκοντα, καὶ ἓν ἑκατόν·	8. Καὶ ἕτερον ἔπεσεν εἰς τὴν γὴν τὴν ἀγαθὴν, καὶ φυὲν ἐποίησε καρπὸν, ἑκατονταπλασίονα.



239 N16

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